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MRS OLIPHANT

TASSO

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TASSO

BY

E. J. HASELL

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The authorities relied on for this volume are Tasso's biography by Serassi, that by his personal friend Manso, and one better still, the poet's own letters, arranged chronologically, in five volumes, with valuable dissertations, by Guasti. The more recent works of Cecchi and Ferrazzi have likewise been consulted.

For the translations of Tasso's poems given here the author is responsible, with the exception of some of those in the "Jerusalem Delivered," which, being taken from the renowned version by Fairfax, are here distinguished by (F.) The few stanzas supplied from Spenser are acknowledged in their place.

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TASSO.

CHAPTER I.

LIFE—EARLY YEARS.

A THOUSAND romantic associations cling round the very name of Torquato Tasso. His strange and eventful story, his genius, above all, his misfortunes, encompass his image with a halo of interest denied to common men, and even to greater poets than himself; and have made his woes the theme of other bards, and his form the central figure of dramas, such as those of Goldoni and of Goethe. Variously estimated by his own contemporaries according to their differing powers of insight—a madman to some, a sage to others—they yet all agree that he was good, they all, in some sense, acknowledge that he was great; while to one of the best of them, his young admirer Manso, the suffering poet in his declining years appeared as the true philosopher, richly endowed with the four cardinal virtues, the blameless victim of his own high sense of truth and honour. Men in later times

have preferred to dwell on Tasso's brilliant youth, his high-placed love, and unexampled miseries; to them he is the typical poet, as the popular mind conceives him, the victim of a romantic passion, half crazed and wholly attractive, with sensibilities too fine for ordinary life, and eyes too rapturously fixed on splendid and remote objects to take prudent heed of the dangers in the path before him. The cause of his misfortunes has been hotly debated: learned Italians attacking and defending, through innumerable treatises, the proposition that love for Leonora of Este, requited by that princess, closed the doors of the prison-hospital of Santa Anna on the ill-fated Torquato; while equal ingenuity has been shown in pursuing other probable causes of the gloom which darkened the great poet's middle life.

A careful perusal of contemporary documents, especially of Tasso's own letters, does something to dispel a mystery which may receive a more complete solution yet in some future discovery of papers; and if not all of the romance associated with the poet's name survives such an investigation, a deep impression is yet left on the reader's mind of childlike simplicity, and of a man worthy alike of pity and of love.

Torquato Tasso was born at Sorrento on March 11, 1544. His father came of an honourable family, citizens of Bergamo; his mother was a Neapolitan of the noble house of the Rossi. Bernardo Tasso, for many years in the service of the Prince of Salerno, wedded at forty-five the beautiful young Portia. Despite the disparity of their ages and the evil customs of their times, they were the happiest and most united of couples. Beside the blue Mediterranean waters, in the orange-

scented groves of Salerno and Sorrento, the loving wife lived only for her husband and little children; while Bernardo gladly left court and camp for her sweet society, and wrote his poem "Amadis," with Portia for its Oriana. It is thus that, before Torquato's birth, he describes his wedded bliss to a friend: "My wife . . . I love as the light of my eyes, and rejoice supremely in being loved by her as much. I have a most beautiful little eldest daughter (Cornelia), if paternal affection has not spoiled my judgment, whose many flashes of virtue and cleverness give me hopes of the greatest happiness in her. It pleased our Lord to take from me, almost as he entered the gates of this life, a little son whom He had given me. Blessed child! he is in heaven, and, knowing the love I bear you, he prays for your happiness and mine." But ere this loss was repaired by the birth of the second famous but less fortunate Torquato, the father was called from Sorrento, "full" (as he calls it) "both of mental and corporeal delights," by Francis I.'s invasion of Piedmont; to repel which, the Prince of Salerno led his followers in the army of the Marquis del Vasto. Diplomatic missions for the same master prevented Torquato's father from seeing much of his son's precocious powers in early childhood, remarkable as Manso, his first biographer, affirms them to have been; and when the boy was eight years old, the Prince fell into final disgrace with his feudal superior and cousin, Charles V., was outlawed with his adherents, and involved Bernardo in his ruin. Unable to return to Naples, where his goods were confiscated and himself proclaimed a traitor, the elder Tasso had to leave his wife to what proved the cruelty instead of the kindness

of her own relations; who, to avoid paying her dowry, prevented her from following her husband, and even, with incredible baseness, tried to get her poor little son included in his father's sentence. Bernardo, when he heard of his good Portia's sufferings, could not help crying out that her persecutors were "not brothers, but mortal enemies—not men, but cruel beasts of prey; her mother, no mother, but, for her sons' sake, her daughter's deadly foe; no woman, but an infernal fury." And when, after many vain efforts once more to see her face, he heard of his faithful wife's death after a very brief illness, who can wonder that he accused her unnatural relations of poisoning her? seeing that, even if they had not done this, they had assuredly shortened her innocent and beautiful life by their unkindness.

Torquato was twelve years old when he lost his mother; but he had been parted from her some eighteen months sooner, having been sent to rejoin his father at Rome—a parting the sorrows of which printed themselves deeply in his mind, as we shall see twenty-four years later. There his education—begun at home under the good old priest Angeluzzo, left in charge by Bernardo of his family, and continued in the Jesuit school at Naples, where, at eight years old, the child studied Latin, rhetoric, and the rudiments of Greek, and made his first communion—went on under the eye of his father; to whom the boy, already almost a man in mind, became very soon a stay and help. Tasso's first extant letter, written shortly after his mother's death, demands the custody of his sister Cornelia for Bernardo, and is expressed with the dignity and gravity of a writer of twice his years. It failed, however, in its object. The girl remained

with the Rossi, and was by them given in marriage to a gentleman named Sersale without consulting her father; but their choice was not in itself a bad one, and Bernardo, assured of the young couple's mutual affection, did not afterwards refuse his blessing to their union.

Meantime he had left Rome, in peril of a siege; sojourned at Urbino,—along with the son of whose learned Duke Torquato for a while pursued his studies;—and finally taken refuge at Venice, where he published his "Amadis," as it seems, in 1561.

His son served his poetic apprenticeship by helping Bernardo in perfecting this loved companion of his wanderings and solace of his sadness; and, undeterred by the sight of a poet's slender gains, and the small results which flowed from the liberality of royal and princely patrons to an author who had actually remodelled his work in compliment to the King of Spain, he engaged before he was himself eighteen in the composition of an original poem. The subject was the adventures of the Rinaldo, already so well known to the Italian public in the pages of Boïardo and Ariosto; but whose love for, and wedding with, the beautiful Clarice, they had left unsung. His prowess in arms, the hindrances and the final success of his affection, are the theme of twelve cantos in the well-known octave verse of Tasso's great predecessors—one or two specimens of his first attempt wherein may not displease the reader. It is thus that Rinaldo salutes Italy, when that son of Aymon crosses the Alps with his friend Florindo :—

> "Hail! land by glorious palms and trophies good
> Adorned, and lofty deeds, and noble hearts;
> Hail! of unconquered heroes' godlike brood

Yet fruitful mother,—and of arms and arts ;
Whose lofty standards, warriors unsubdued,
Have faced the Western main, the Parthian darts,—
So breaking down each barrier raised by foes,
With strong just laws to give the world repose."
—Canto VI.

Rinaldo seeks glory to please a Lady whose "grace is such that it can gladden every sad heart," and his respectful love for her is the forerunner of Tancred's for Clorinda. An Italian critic of our own day (Cecchi) discerns in his story "the scent of a flower, of as yet uncertain colour, beginning to unclose its petals to the morning light;" and sees in it, "along with a new feeling of moral order, a new method of depicting nature make its appearance" in a stanza like this :—

"And now Aurora, wakened by sweet strain
Of wanton birds, came lovely forth to sight,
With rosy hands the mantle dark of grain
Tearing, that wraps the gloomy form of night,
While air, earth, water gleesome laughed again,
Rejoicing in her treasures rich and bright ;
And from her fair face heaven kept sprinkling round
With pearls, of morning dew congealed, the ground."
—Canto VIII.

In many other respects Torquato wrote under Ariosto's influence; though, of course, sounding the magic horn less vigorously than his master. But his "Rinaldo" is a wonderful production when its writer's years are taken into account, and was fitly characterised by the French poet Ménage, when he said that it was indeed a juvenile work, but one which no boy save Torquato Tasso could have written.

Published at the request of admiring friends with a precipitancy in strange contrast with the long delays before the "Amadis" of the father, and the "Jerusalem Delivered" of the son, saw the light, "Rinaldo" made its young author famous throughout Italy. Bernardo owned himself outdone by the only rival whose superiority he could view without sorrow; and Ferrara, the home of romance-poetry, bade Torquato occupy Ariosto's vacated place within her walls. Three years after his first appearance as an author, having finished his studies at Padua, he was called thither by the Cardinal Lewis of Este (to whom he had dedicated "Rinaldo," and whose sister Lucretia he had complimented in that poem), and appointed one of his gentlemen-in-waiting.

Torquato's age was now twenty-one years and seven months. The author of one pleasing poem, he was known to have commenced a work of far greater importance; an epic on the story of the first Crusade. He was ready, besides, whenever required, with sonnet,[1] madrigal, or ode; and, thus equipped, he speedily became the idol of the learned and love-making Court to which he had been introduced. The wedding of his patron's brother, Alphonso, Duke of Ferrara, with his second wife, Barbara of Austria, took place a month or two after Tasso's arrival; but well as this princess was loved at Ferrara, it was on the Duke's sisters, Lucretia and Leonora, that the courtiers' eyes continued to be fixed—their beauty, wit, and enlightened patronage of talent that made Ferrara the palace of delights which for some years Tasso found it. In that city, at that

[1] Of these he produced more than a thousand in the course of his life; of the other two kinds of poem a very considerable number.

moment, the refined intellectual pleasures of the Renaissance met with the barbaric splendours of the Middle Ages, and the result was magical. Jousts and courts of love, grand spectacles and brilliant processions, were made beautiful to the eye by artistic skill, and adorned by the resources of mythology and the creations of poetry. The tales of chivalry, the romances of fairy-land, found bodily shape when Alphonso, true to the traditions of his house, welcomed his imperial bride, or entertained a princely visitor, with some grand display; the material wealth exhibited in which was its least precious part. Castles offered fronts made impregnable by art-magic for valorous knights to storm in search of imprisoned beauty; the "Temple of Love" opened its doors; the "Happy Island" invited the beholder to its bewitching glades. On more ordinary occasions mornings spent in the chase alternated with others employed in learned discussions in the Academy, to which ladies listened with interest, at times entering the lists themselves—as when Tasso, among "fifty amorous conclusions" which on one occasion he maintained there, having placed as his twenty-first the proposition that "Man by nature loves more intensely than woman," the poetess Orsina Cavalletti stepped forward to controvert him, and was held to have borne herself well in the encounter. Dances and concerts of music, of which last the Duke was particularly fond, enlivened the evenings. And to Tasso's inexperienced eye that prince seemed a model sovereign; for he was wise in affairs, brave in the field, able and willing to assist him in the military details of his great poem, and above all, he appeared, by his distinguished notice of the poet, to

recognise the claims of genius to an equality with the rulers of the earth.

Doubtless there were darker shades in the picture; but they were unseen as yet. Misery lurked in the alleys of Ferrara while its broad streets were gay; and the cries of the children of the poor for bread might have been heard by an attentive ear amid the sounds of trump and clarion; for while the Court diverted itself the populace suffered hunger. Then, too, the Duke could be stern and cruel. His chastisements of offending subjects were harsh; and he sometimes smote swiftly and secretly where the offender seemed too powerful to bring openly to justice. He was believed to have put his first wife, Lucretia de' Medici, secretly to death for her unfaithfulness, real or imagined. If he honoured learning by making ambassadors of poets and prime ministers of university professors, he yet could disregard the intercession of the Muses, and cast down their favourites, if they offended him, with a hasty and unsparing hand from the heights to which he had raised them. Moreover, while the arcades and halls of the palace of Ferrara might be grand and stately, the gardens of the summer retreat at Belriguardo enchanting as the scenes depicted by Ariosto, yet amid the roses and lilies round the splashing fountains there lurked the dragon of the envy and enmity bred in courts. To be praised and admired in public was to be hated and conspired against in secret; and princely favour was sure to awaken the jealousy and dislike of rival courtiers.

All this was revealed to Tasso's unsuspicious nature by slow degrees. But at first his happiness must have

seemed complete,—his surroundings all that a poet's fancy could dream. Fair landscape and noble pageant; beauty, whether sculptured and painted before him in calm repose, or living to bid him bask in her smiles; the learned discourse of philosophers, the friendly rivalry of poets like Guarini,—were his; above all, his was the delight of reading canto after canto of his great poem, as it slowly shaped itself in his mind amid these favouring influences, to the two women best fitted to comprehend it—whose interest in it was an honour, whose approval a rich prize—the Duke's sisters, Lucretia and Leonora.

Born of a French mother, Rénée, daughter of Louis XII., though unhappily separated from her by her embracing the Reformed religion, the princesses of Ferrara were distinguished alike by their talents and their beauty. The elder sister, though ten years older than Tasso, retained hers, not only at the epoch of his introduction to her, but long after, if we may believe his sonnets. We are expressly told, also, that a sight of her personal attractions removed the young prince of Urbino's unwillingness to marry a lady so many years his senior. Besides this, Lucretia was an able diplomatist, a lover of music—Alphonso took much pleasure in her evening concerts—and a good judge of poetry. Her name occurs more frequently in Tasso's letters than does that of her sister, and an ingenious Italian [1] has sought to prove that she was the real object of the poet's devotion, addressed at first ostensibly to her namesake Lucretia Bendidio; [2] but of this, as of so many assertions made

[1] Giacomazzi.

[2] Tasso's rivalry with the Duke's powerful Minister, Pigna, for this

about his romantic story, there is no proof. Rather, while "beauty and talent, loftiness of mind and intellect" (see Dialogue on Nobility) were assigned by Tasso to both sisters as their attributes, is there reason to think that it was the Princess Leonora who awoke the tenderer feeling in his breast. Both ladies emulated the courage of their fabled ancestress, Bradamante—as, for instance, by refusing to quit the palace when an earthquake was shaking it to its foundations; both were wise in affairs of state, for if Lucretia negotiated difficult treaties, Leonora, as regent during her brother's absence, "gave his subjects," says Monolessi, "infinite satisfaction;" but it was the younger sister who possessed the nobler qualities of mind, the more ethereal and spiritual beauty, and the deeper religious feeling. Leonora's refusal to marry, and her avoidance of the noisier diversions of the Court, were partly the result of her weak health, which delayed her introduction to Tasso by preventing her from being present at her brother's marriage festivities; but were also partly caused by her love of devout meditation and silent prayer,—prayers which were believed by the people of Ferrara to have such efficacy, that on one occasion, in answer to them, the river had received command to stay from flooding the town. There seems little reason to doubt that Leonora was the original of Tasso's Sophronia. Her vestal purity and seclusion, her lofty and regal thoughts, her beauty only

lady's favour, seemed dangerous for him to Leonora; by whose counsel he appeased his competitor by the device of a commentary on his love-verses. There is veiled satire in Tasso's comparison of Pigna to Petrarch in this prose of a poet on the poetry of a prose-writer; but his profession of belief that Pigna had succeeded in duly magnifying perfections too great for his own pen, seems to have been accepted.

cared for as the adornment of the goodness within, were gladly recognised by the Court and by the Duke[1] as traits of the ornament of Ferrara transplanted to the Holy City; while her ripened years, which must strike every reader as an unexpected and scarcely needed feature in the description of the virgin martyr, are at once accounted for when we remember that Leonora was eight or nine years older than the poet.

This last circumstance has perhaps not been sufficiently attended to by those who have discussed the further question, whether Tasso meant himself by the young Olindo, who loves Sophronia so hopelessly and so faithfully. His respectful devotion, his highest and best affections, may well be believed to have been hers; but lower and earthlier shrines received at the same time much incense from his hands. No certainty seems attainable; but a careful study of all the documents bearing on the case leads to the conclusion that the living Leonora was to Tasso what the dead Beatrice was to Dante—an inspiration, an ennobling and elevating influence; while to the high-born recluse Tasso was an interest in life, an adopted brother, to whom more of her heart was given than she herself knew; who could not fall below the high standard she had set before him without causing her pain; whose affections she could not without grief see given to another. We know that she accepted with pleasure her poet's reverent homage; that she ever allowed him to offer her more than this there is no evidence. That

[1] It was to please the Duke as well as himself that Tasso declared it his final intention to retain the charming story of Sophronia, despite of adverse critics, as an episode in his great poem.

more passionate poems, nominally addressed to beauties of the Court, were really meant for Leonora, has been asserted but cannot be proved. Those of Tasso's poems which bear her name, either take occasion from each varying incident of sickness, recovery, departure, and so forth, to pay her graceful compliments; or, leaving the sonnet for the more ambitious ode, declare, as in a celebrated canzone published before Tasso had been two years at Ferrara, that his best songs are unworthy of her esteem—only imploring her not to disdain them, albeit thousands of scrolls enshrine her name, and thousands of flames are kindled in her honour by fame.

"Since God, whose likeness I in thee discern,
When worshipped with love pure and holy
Disdains not roof most lowly,
While to Him mortal torches burn,—
Him for whose glory shines the sun eterne."

The name of Leonora, entering amid her poet's dim rhymes, is to gild them as the sun does the clouds; her light, if fully revealed, would be too dazzling, and therefore she must not take it amiss if his feeble colours depict her but in part. And then follows the strophe on which biographers have commented, and will comment, with varying conclusions:—

"Surely, when first its beautiful serene
Thy brow unto these eyes of mine revealed,
And, all in arms, I Love saw walking there,
Had Reverence, had not Wonder straight congealed
My breast to coldest rock, two deaths had been
This heart's sad portion in its dim despair.
Yet e'en that marble hard could tear
One shaft, one fire its coldness warm;
And, all too rash, should one his breast disarm

Of that strong shield, my covering lifted high
Before thee, lady, humbly kneeling,
He, those sharp arrows feeling,
Burned by that fatal light, must lie
Where Phaëton by thy river[1] fell to die."

Yet further on, in the same canzone, he sees that death itself would be a better life if it came from one whose eyes might renew the world to the youth of the phœnix, and reclothe it with purer and lovelier forms; and who can make even her poet's humble song a glorious one, whose verses now derive their only honour from her who—

"*Le onora* col bel nome santo."

It is hard to say how much of this was fancy and how much feeling. At all events, Leonora is the presiding genius of Tasso's great poem. He declares as much in the following sonnet addressed to her, on his resuming his work at her bidding:—

"If I, a painter not unskilled, should yet
Renew in verse high, antique memories;
If Helicon should ope, and my emprise
With friendly favouring breezes forward set;
Then should the Scythian hear; thy name should get
Hearers 'mid Libya's sunny sands, while rise
'Mid clash of arms, 'mid Mars' high pageantries,
The lauds of modesty with beauty met.
Thy praise as frame right richly wrought shall be,
That shines some well-limned picture fair around,
And draws men's eyes to it with rays of gold.
And fit it is such gift to bring to thee;
Since 'tis thy work this hand no more disdains
The pen, and seeks the task laid by of old."

[1] The Po.

It may well be that Tasso thought of his own hopeless love for this kind and beautiful princess when he depicted Tancred's for Clorinda and Herminia's for Tancred; meantime their relations were, externally at least, those of the enlightened patroness and the grateful *protégé*, who, after all, knows that he has better things to give than those which he receives.

When, after five years spent principally at Ferrara, Tasso prepared to attend the Cardinal of Este into France, at the close of 1570, he drew up a will, the most important item in which were several finished cantos of his "Godfrey," as it was then called. For assistance, should his executor need any, he bids him "have recourse to the favour of the most excellent Lady Leonora, who, I feel confident, will, for the love of me, liberally extend it to him." But the exclusive reference to Leonora in this document is caused by the fact that Lucretia was not then at Ferrara. She had been married in the previous February to Tasso's former fellow-student, Francesco Maria della Rovere, Prince of Urbino; and the poet had invoked Hymen to bless their nuptials, and then turned with fonder glance to the "proudly humble beauty secluded in her dignified abode," adorning that soul of hers which was lovelier even than its mortal shell—it might yet be for some truly to be envied husband. "Oh felice lo sposo a cui t'adorni!" sighs he.

The other interesting point in Tasso's will is its proof of dutiful regard to his father's memory. Bernardo's last shelter had been Mantua, where the great house of Gonzaga proved true friends both to himself and to his son. That son had closed his eyes

in a town of the Mantuan territory—of which the kind Duke had made Bernardo governor—on September 4, 1569; but straitened means had prevented Torquato from erecting to him a befitting monument. He charges his friend in his will to see to it after due payment of his debts, and provides a Latin inscription. Years later we find him bewailing his own failure so to honour one whom he never ceased to mourn, and thus trying to stir his powerful friend, Cardinal Albano, to do what he had himself vainly wished to accomplish:—

"Albano, no fair tomb encloses yet
My father's bones in marbles rare and white,
Adorned by prose, and verses exquisite,—
Dark earth still holds them in her deep breast set.
Alas! for piety which pays its debt
Honouring loved names, nor errs, had bid me write:
'Here Tasso lies, who sang in court and fight
Loves fabled and wars feigned; let none forget
How much he knew and did.' In temple high
This on his tomb I should have graved, and then
The passing pilgrim would have stopped to gaze.
But this hard fate forbade. Though late, ah! when
Shall be this wish fulfilled? O satisfy
Me here, and gain in heaven my father's praise."

Tasso's stay in France occupied about a year. He enjoyed the conversation of the French men of letters, and was presented to their king and patron, Charles IX., with whom his biographer, Manso, reports a remarkable conversation of his. C. "Who is the happiest of beings?" T. "God." C. "But who amongst men?" T. "Whosoever is the most godlike." C. "Wherein can a man be most godlike: by lording it over others, or by conferring benefits upon them?" T. "By virtue."

After a time Tasso seems to have displeased both the French Court and his own patron by his frankness. There was much temporising for political reasons with the Huguenots: and Tasso said in later years that he made the Cardinal, or at least his suite, angry by a greater profession of the Catholic faith than they thought at that time expedient. He asked and obtained leave to return to Italy, having profited so little in purse by the esteem professed for his talents by the French Court, that he went back in the same suit of clothes in which he had crossed the Alps twelve months before; but he had closely observed a new country, and diligently compared France and Italy,[1] naturally in general to the advantage of the latter.

Good news met him in Rome, whither he travelled with the cardinal's secretary, and where he was kindly received by his patron's uncle, the Cardinal Hippolytus of Ferrara. Duke Alphonso had appointed him one of his own gentlemen-in-waiting, with befitting salary; and afterwards graciously dispensed him from any duties of his office which might interfere with those studies from which the Court expected so much. No wonder that Tasso's mind turned gladly to Ferrara, as the following sonnet intimates:—

"That noble mount where ancient marbles rise,
And bid us the Greek artist's work admire,
O lovely Leonore, my thoughts, that tire
Afar from you, have set before mine eyes.
There I'd indite now prose, now poesies,
On shadowed grass, while loving thoughts inspire,

[1] See his letter to Contrari.

And wake my sighs ; and sing to Tuscan lyre
The praise of heroes, and their enterprise,
While, at that strain, the trees around that spring,
Hippolytus, a glorious name, resound :
Who here detains my steps ? ah ! who will guide
O'er Alpine mountains and o'er deserts wide
My steps to you, that I may write and sing,—
My hair with laurels, that he planted, bound ?"

He reached those happy groves early in May. In September, the good Duchess Barbara, whose influence had ever been readily joined with that of the two princesses for Tasso's advancement, died; and Tasso's mournful odes bewailed in her untimely fate "the severance of one of the noblest pairs ever united, seeing that what Love joins, Death divides." His verse shows us Italy grieving over her vanished hopes of noble defenders springing from this child and sister of emperors and of kings; the daughter of a house which "subdued two worlds, but conquered both for Christ —ready, for Christ's sake, to give them up again." For this gentle and lovely lady, says the poet, "Death himself, like some victor learning the manners of the vanquished, put on a gentle aspect; and, though pitiless, clothed himself with pity."

What, then, must have been her gratitude to the first of living poets, when, faithful to past memories, he not only beguiled her forsaken hours by his delightful pastoral, or by cantos of his great forthcoming epic, but produced sonnet after sonnet in her praise? In one of these he tells her that Love's golden autumn fruit is better than his April flowers. Another, and one of Tasso's best, is the following:—

"In years unripe, thou like the rich red rose
Didst show,—that to no breeze will bare her breast,
Nor to the sun's warm rays; but aye doth rest
A shamefaced maiden, hid in green leaves close.
Or rather (for nought mortal like thee shows)
The heavenly dawn, that gilds the mountain's crest
And pearls the fields, might represent thee best,
When o'er clear skies her dewy light she strows.
Now age matured from thee takes nought; nor thee,
Though careless robed, in all their rich array,
Vanquish, or equal, youthful beauteous dames.
E'en thus the flower charms more when odorously
Wide spread its leaves; the sun at high noonday,
Far more than in the morning, shines and flames."

Tasso spent the whole summer at Lucretia's Court, partly at Pesaro, partly at Castel-Durante, where the Dukes of Urbino were wont to pass the warm season. Once more the Princess's enlightened criticisms assisted in the progress of his great work; while her gifts—notably a precious ruby, which afterwards helped Tasso in an hour of need—showed her high sense of his poetic powers.

Meantime a silence fell between Leonora and her poet. Was it simply that she feared malicious whispers[1] against

[1] Campori says that the Cardinal, Tasso's first patron, jealous of

her fair fame, and so would not encourage him to write to her? Had she awakened his jealousy by the honour she paid to his rival-poet Guarini—perhaps partly for the sake of showing that it was genius in the abstract which won her regard? Or did the homage which Lucretia was receiving pain her? A mind wounded by the two first causes, and somewhat uneasy about the third, may be discerned in Tasso's letter of September 1573 to his Princess; in which, about to return to Ferrara (Lucretia shortly following), he apologises for not having written sooner, and offers, as his excuse for writing now, a sonnet, "very unlike those beautiful sonnets which I imagine that your Excellence is now very often accustomed to hear" (from Guarini and from Pigna); "for it is as poor in art and in conceits as is its writer's fortune; nor, *in my present state*, could anything better come from me. Still I send it, thinking that, whether good or bad, it will produce the effect which I desire. . . . I made it for a poor lover, who, having been angry with his lady for a while, now, no longer able to hold out, has to surrender and to ask her grace."

The sonnet, as originally penned by Tasso, is as follows:—

"Wrath, warrior weak, though champion bold! who me,
With arms all frail and battered, to that field
Conductest where Love darts eterne doth wield,
Threatening with torch celestial,—see, ah! see
Thy sword is shivering, and thy cold frosts flee;
Love's wings' first waft has all thine ice unsealed.
Ah! rash one, sue for peace; submissive yield

---

the poet's admiration for Lucretia Bendidio, tried to keep him apart from his sister's ladies by warning Leonora that malignant tongues blamed her familiarity with the poet.

Ere his hot flame consume, his shafts on thee
Prove their immortal temper. Lo! I cry
On bended knee for grace,—my naked breast
Offering, my weak hand raised; let pity fight
For me, and gain me palms, or death at least.
Yet if *she* shed for me one tear, delight
My wounds would be, and victory to die."

This overture—for, in spite of his disclaimer, we can scarcely doubt that Tasso is here pleading his own cause—may have been accepted at the time, and yet Leonora's confidence in his devotion not completely restored. If Tasso appeared in any degree out of favour with her, envious hearts there were many ready to rejoice at, and evil tongues willing to widen, the breach. For it was now that Tasso began to be rudely roused out of his careless security—bred of a generous confidence in those fellow-men whom he had always treated kindly, and towards whom he was himself conscious of none but good intentions—by hearing malicious whispers, and discovering plots to ruin him by false accusations; or, if that could not be, yet to destroy his reputation as an author. Tasso's first impulse on such discovery was to leave Ferrara, and go and live at Rome, perhaps under the protection of Cardinal Albano,—a Bergamasque by nation, and his father's and his own friend. But he felt that he could not do this honourably without first acquitting himself of his obligations to his patron, by publishing his great poem, with a dedication to Alphonso. Accordingly, he left a tragedy, which he had begun, unfinished, and spent the year 1574, and the first months of 1575, in finishing his "Jerusalem Delivered." But in his great desire to make it perfect, he determined to submit

his poem to a long and laborious process of correction,—in which, unfortunately for his own peace of mind, he desired and obtained the help of his old companion at Padua, Scipio Gonzaga (now a learned ecclesiastic, afterwards titular Patriarch of Jerusalem, and finally a Cardinal), and a council of four other men of letters, likewise resident at Rome; among whom, to our surprise, we find the name of the hypercritic Sperone.

With these worthies, Tasso, in letters innumerable, debated all sorts of points: the admissibility of certain words and phrases, the harmony of rhymes, the probability or propriety of some of his incidents;—yielding things occasionally from conviction, at other times to keep his self-chosen judges' favour, and to disarm the opposition of the Church; but in some matters standing firm from inward unshaken conviction. His rivals at Ferrara rejoiced to hear of the adverse criticisms from Rome, and were guilty of the meanness of opening his correspondents' letters, and spreading abroad exaggerated reports of their unfavourable judgments. All these sources of anxiety, added to a growing fear that he might be refused leave to publish his poem, began to affect Tasso's mind, and to tell on his health. A serious though short illness was its immediate result. But Alphonso as yet remained true to him, and, with undiminished interest in his great work, spent much of June 1575 in hearing him read portions of it, and in discussing them with him in the cool halls of Belriguardo, or in evening walks in its leafy alleys or by its fish-ponds. Lucretia, too, endeavoured to cheer him. Her father-in-law, the Duke of Urbino, had died; and soon after her husband gave his childless and unloved wife leave to

return to her brother's Court, where she spent the rest of her life. There she seems to have seen the unwisdom of Tasso's long hesitations over his poem, and to have kindly chidden him for his delay in publishing it (in the following spring we find her writing strongly to him on the subject); and now, secluded for a while in the palace at Ferrara, she bade him beguile her lonely hours by reading to her such of its cantos as she had not yet heard. But Tasso represents himself as going to do so as unwillingly as Alphonso spared him for the purpose. Whether sorrow, born of hopeless love, tormented him; whether growing suspicions of the hollowness of Court favour embittered the cup which had once been so sweet; whether a taint of unsoundness began now to show itself in his richly endowed mind,—whatever was the cause, Tasso grew moody and discontented. In vain Lucretia warned him not to give his rivals occasion to traduce him as fickle and disloyal; he began seriously to entertain the idea of quitting Alphonso's service for that of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, or of his brother, the Cardinal de' Medici,—unfriendly to his present patron as he knew they were.

This plan had been proposed to him by his friend Scipio Gonzaga, and in pursuance of it he took advantage of the Jubilee, and paid that visit to Rome which he afterwards looked back on as the fountain of his misfortunes: doubtless because it shook his patron's confidence in him, made him at last open his ears to his detractors, and, but too probably, led him to consent to their prying into Tasso's papers to find evidence of his unfaithfulness. For to Alphonso the idea of a change of patrons carried with it the unpardonable affront of a

meditated change in the dedication of that great work which was to transmit his name to posterity. He knew how Tasso's father Bernardo had revoked the honour intended for the king of France on the title-page of his "Amadis," and had inscribed there instead the name of the King of Spain; and it could not escape him how easily a stroke of Tasso's pen might replace the "magnanimous Alphonso" of the opening of the "Jerusalem" by a "magnanimous Francis" or "Ferdinand." Anyhow, it would seem that the luckless poet displeased the Princes of Este without gaining the favour of those of Medici; for neither the Cardinal, visited at Rome, nor the Grand Duke on his return through Florence, appear to have received him well enough to make him forget the kindness to which he was accustomed at Ferrara. Tasso saw clearly that, though they might not be sorry to vex Alphonso by tempting him away from him, they did not really appreciate his fine gifts. Had he known that the Grand Duke wrote of him as a wit who, for anything he knew, was a madman, he would have more decidedly rejected his offers: as it was, he contented himself by looking to Florence as a possible resource for the future; and for the present, preferring the banks of the Po to those of the Arno. So things went on through 1576: Gonzaga writing reproachful letters about his fickleness; Tasso's enemies at Ferrara carrying on their cabals against him with greater prospects of success; the Duke friendly in manner but secretly distrustful; while the revision of the poem proceeded slowly, and probably excited suspicions that its author was delaying its publication for some hidden purpose of his own.

Meantime it is to be feared that a younger and more

beautiful Leonora eclipsed the Princess who had been till now Tasso's guiding-star—partially at least,—to his mind. The Carnival of 1576 at Ferrara was graced by the presence of three most charming ladies. The young Countess of Scandiano, Leonora Sanvitale, appeared there with her still beautiful step-mother, Barbara Sanseverino, and attended by a lovely girl called Olympia. All three were courted and admired by wits and poets, of whom Tasso was chief. The young Countess had the good taste to prefer his verses to those of his rivals, and thereby, it is said, greatly affronted her elderly admirer, Guarini; and the other Leonora must have been more than woman to have heard unmoved that her own poet had told this youthful goddess, in one sonnet—

"Fairest is she, by you the least surpassed;"

and in another, that no painter could give any adequate notion of her enchanting lips, or the radiant gold of her hair.

Doubtless Tasso's enemies did their best to widen the breach between him and the Princess. For a time they succeeded, as the following sonnet (if genuine, as Guasti believes it to be), with its curious annotations, shows. Its title, and notes, to which the emphatic underlinings refer, are said by experts to be as undoubtedly in Leonora's hand as its text is in Tasso's; amid whose papers at the time of his imprisonment the rejected peace-offering must have been found:—

"A Cruel Doubt.

"*To the Most Illustrious and Most Excellent Lady, Donna Leonora of Este.*"

"Once did I see my foe with *pity kind*[1]
Adorn her features, gently nourishing

By hopes, and fair *delights* from them that spring,[2]
High flames with which all *sudden burned* my mind.[3]
Now, *why I know not*,[4] ire and rage combined
Over her brow and breast their armour fling;
Her looks perturbed and chary to me bring
Challenge of war, in which I *death must find.*[5]
Ah! let none dare, because a face serene
Invites, and shows *smooth track*[6] for him to keep,
Love, in thy realm to spread his sails. 'Tis thus
The cruel sea with placid breast is seen
By *heedless* sailors,[7] and then treacherous,
Sinks them 'mid rocks and monsters of the deep."[8]

"[1] A sign that he then deserved it.

"[2] Which she at the present moment *much* repents of.

"[3] Like straw, which quickly burns, and is as quickly extinguished.

"[4] Does he dare to say he does not know why?

"[5] Lovers' usual nonsense.

"[6] Harm happens to those who leave the track marked out for them.

"[7] Like the poet, who does not know how to rule himself, and still less how to bridle his tongue and his pen.

"[8] The poet is unjust in attributing to others what is entirely his own fault."

Perhaps these somewhat sharp admonitions produced amendment. Perhaps — nay, certainly — Leonora was generous, and made allowance, after the first bitterness was past, for the rovings of a poet's fancy. She still resolved to stand his friend, and to do what in her lay to promote the perfecting of his great work. We find her, shortly after the probable date of this sonnet, telling Tasso that the heritage which had come to her through her mother's death would enable her to assist him more substantially than heretofore;[1] and taking him in the

[1] These somewhat business-like relations of Tasso with Leonora, and the matter-of-fact way in which he refers in his letters to his

following July, in her train, for rest to the villa of Consandoli, in which pleasant seclusion he is said to have finished his beautiful episode of Herminia among the shepherds. The subjoined sonnet to Leonora may be regarded as the expression of his repentant gratitude; though, unless its "tre lustri" are a poetic exaggeration, it must be referred to a later date:—

"Though Love in youthful face may show to me,
O royal lady, lily set by rose,
He cannot make me so forget the woes
Of fifteen years, the scrolls writ fruitlessly.
This heart your nobless first made yours to be,
Which yours remained through lustrums, inly knows
A type of beauty which more splendid glows
Than pearl, and gem, and coral fair to see.
This could its sighs sound forth in notes so clear,
That they might kindle hearts of icy cold
To warmth unwonted, by its love's strong flame;
But, grown a miser of its treasures dear—
Your virtues,—not as it was wont of old,
It worships them within, nor breathes your name."

Meantime Tasso had extracted all the benefit he could from his well-meaning censors, and come to the wise determination to follow his own judgment in essential points, rather than theirs, in the completion of his "Jerusalem Delivered." "One master is enough for a man," he says in a confidential letter. "What ill-luck is mine, that every one wishes to play the tyrant with me. Counsellors I do not refuse, provided they are content to keep within the bounds of an adviser. . . . I

hopes of assistance and advancement through her, and to his fears that they will remain unrealised, scarcely correspond with the romantic view of them as lovers.

am resolved to be free, not only in my judgments, but also in my writings and my actions." Still there were signs that the poet's mind had not passed unclouded through its prolonged anxieties. We find him in March 1576 asking for the post of historiographer to the house of Este, vacant through the death of his rival Pigna, in order to get a good pretext, by its being refused him, for leaving Ferrara; then, having unexpectedly obtained it, while making occasional and spasmodic efforts to discharge its duties, reconciled by the Duke's kindness and the renewed friendliness of the Princesses to his position; writing, in April, in the highest spirits, of his augmented library and the rich furniture of his summer chamber, of the honours he is receiving and the dignified bearing he is able to maintain, of the great promises made to him, and of the great benefits which three astrologers concur in saying will come to him through women. Six weeks later his mood changes, and he observes in a disappointed tone, "The predictions of the Lady Leonora as yet produce no effect whatever, nor do I think that any will soon be produced by them." But, ever generous, we find him willing to employ his Court favour even for the benefit of his harsh critic Sperone; though, for some reason, he found negotiating in his behalf with his two patronesses a matter to tax his "utmost dexterity."

Meantime Tasso's mind was being further shaken by discovering the cabal against him, and passing from over-confidence to perhaps an excess of distrust. He found out that, while he had been spending Easter at Modena, a false friend, whom he likens to the treacherous Brunello of the "Orlando Furioso," had tampered with his locks and examined his papers. By

degrees he discovered that Montecatino, the Duke's new prime minister, was at the head of a plot against him, in which many whom he had trusted joined. Meeting one of them (his former friend Maddalò, as Serassi thinks) in the court of the palace in September, and taxing him with a recently discovered breach of faith, the man—strong, it is to be feared, in the expectation of the Duke's support—insolently gave him the lie, and Tasso replied by a blow. The coward went away without showing any resentment; but returned with his brothers and struck Tasso, though without injuring him, in the back. Tasso turned boldly on his assailants; who fled without striking another blow, and were obliged to leave Ferrara, having committed a great offence by brawling within the ducal precincts.

But the sinister feature of the case was this, that Maddalò himself took refuge with the Duke's own ambassador at Florence; and that Alphonso, whatever might be his professions and assurances to Tasso, never had him dislodged and brought to justice. The affair made it only too evident that the Duke's ministers were now Tasso's enemies, and their master his lukewarm friend. The discovery of his correspondence with the hated Medici was beginning to have its effect. Possibly, too, those who were poisoning Alphonso's mind had shown him wanton love-verses found among Tasso's papers, and made him believe (as Rosini does) that Leonora was their object—an affront impossible for a Prince to forgive.

CHAPTER IV.

TASSO'S FLIGHT.

The year 1576 closed with a grievous annoyance to Tasso—the printing without his leave of an imperfect copy of his great poem; to stay the publication of which, the Duke wrote on his behalf to the various sovereigns and states of Italy. Grateful for this benefit, we find him renouncing all further designs to quit Alphonso's service, in a letter from Modena, where he had spent Christmas; and telling Scipio Gonzaga that his obligations to the Duke were such as life itself could not repay, adding in another letter the remarkable words, "I not only ought not to, but could not, do otherwise; but there are things which one cannot write." At Modena, too, Tasso seems to have received an ode in his own praise, from Horace, nephew of the great Ariosto, depreciating his famous uncle and all other poets in comparison with the author of the "Jerusalem Delivered." These compliments were insincere, as well as excessive, for Horace had joined the band of Tasso's adverse critics. The poet's letter of thanks for the praise, of reproof for the exaggeration, is both witty and dignified. "Who are you," he says, in playful remon-

strance, "to sit in such a judgment? to pronounce sentence of exile? to banish indifferently all other writers? Do you not perceive that you offend me along with the rest? If you wish to make me first, there needs must be some one to be second; but if you banish all, among whom am I to enjoy the primacy? . . . If you offer to crown me as one of a number of not ignoble poets, I accept; but if, destroying all the others, you reserve one only crown as the reward of the most excellent and sovereign, this, even if you offer it to me, I refuse. For it, by the judgment of the learned, of the world, and of myself, has already been placed on your own poet's head, from whom it would be more difficult to snatch it than to wrest his mace from Hercules. Would you dare to stretch forth your hand against those venerable locks, and be not only a rash judge, but an unnatural nephew?" He goes on, in a passage of real eloquence, to own that,—a Themistocles kept wakeful by the trophies of a Miltiades,—the garlands of the Ferrarese Homer had cost him many vigils; but not from a wish to pluck from them a single flower or leaf, but from the (maybe excessive) desire to gain others, if not equal yet similar,—such at least whose green might defy the frosts of death. "This has been the object of my long night-watches; its achievement will be their reward: if it fails, my consolation must be the example of many famous men, who thought it no shame to fall in a great enterprise."

Would that in all Tasso's letters there rang the same clear manly tones! But, from this date onwards, they contain indications of a mind unsettled by suspicions of others, and made morbid by self-distrust. Forged

letters disturb his confidence in his oldest and most trusted friends; he has no servant on whose fidelity he can rely. He believes that Giraldini (before referred to as Brunello) has denounced him to the Inquisition, and remembers with nervous fear religious doubts which he had expressed in familiar conversation. He fears poison; his reason, though not overthrown, still totters sufficiently to give colour to the idea, now rapidly gaining ground, that he is mad. At last, June 17, he draws his knife in the Duchess Lucretia's own apartment, and attacks a servant who, he suspects, has been hired to poison him. For this offence he is confined in a room in the palace court; and the Grand Duke of Tuscany's ambassador writes his master word that this has been done rather to cure than to punish, and that all pity so worthy and good a gentleman for having his brain vexed and disordered by such strange vapours.

Alphonso, still apparently meaning kindly, released him after a short detention, and took him once more to Belriguardo. But into its delightful gardens, fears (how well grounded it is now impossible to say) pursued the unhappy Tasso. His dread of a prosecution for heresy drove him back to Ferrara; where, insisting that an acquittal which the Duke had previously contrived for him before the Inquisitor of Ferrara was invalid, he betook himself to the Franciscan convent, and petitioned the cardinals of the Inquisition to cite him to Rome, and try his cause fully there. His acts and letters at this time betray high nervous excitement. One moment he dreams of becoming a Franciscan monk; another he imagines that men refuse to go into his case and estab-

lish his innocence, for fear of displeasing the Duke by disclosing the base conduct of some of his servants. But these fluctuations of a troubled mind did not last long. Towards the end of July 1577, Tasso fled from Ferrara.

The instinct which makes sorrowful manhood turn towards the lost paradise of childhood, directed Tasso's steps to Naples. Not far from that city, at Sorrento, lived his now widowed sister—not seen by him for so many years—Cornelia Sersale. To her he made his way on foot, through the Abruzzi, changing clothes for fear of detection—on account of the old outlawry of his father and himself—with a shepherd, in whose cot he had passed the night. And when, in his sheepskin garb, the weary and haggard traveller met once more by the blue Mediterranean waters, under those orange-trees where they had played as children, with his sister, it would have been strange indeed had Cornelia recognised him at first sight. She was alone, as it happened, when the stranger introduced himself as the bearer of letters from her brother. These letters, a cruel trial of affection, imported that Torquato was in great danger and in urgent need of her help; and the messenger's own lips added harrowing details. Cornelia fainted; and then Tasso, satisfied at last, made himself known to her. His sister received him kindly, and in her company and that of her giant daughters (as he playfully calls his tall young nieces) and her two sons—whom he afterwards with mistaken kindness strove hard to commend to the service of various princes—he spent a few halcyon days.

But the storm-tossed sailor soon wearied of the quiet port. To let his enemies deprive him of his adored

Duke's favour without striking a blow to regain it, seemed to his fevered mind intolerable. Before many weeks had passed, he was writing letters imploring the restoration of his "most serene" patron's favour: after two or three months, despite of the silence of Alphonso and Lucretia, and Leonora's guarded and not very hopeful answer,[1] he was at Rome on his way back to Ferrara. His Roman friends advised him not to return, and made efforts to recover for him his papers left in the Duke's hands. Alphonso promised to restore them, but did not do so; and his agents at Rome encouraged Tasso to complete his journey. Their master wrote like one tired of the poet's groundless suspicions, yet willing to give him one more trial. Conscious that he had never himself sought his life (easy to take, as he coolly remarks, had he had that fancy), he had learned to regard all Tasso's other suspicions as equally ill-grounded with this one. But he hoped that medical treatment might cure him; otherwise he would have once more to leave Ferrara, and this time not to return. Cold as was this encouragement, yet urged by the romantic fancy that a proof of unlimited confidence was needed to make up for his previous distrust, Tasso (even thus imperfectly reassured) resolved to put his life, as he says, unconditionally into his Prince's hands — towards whom he declares that he "felt a stronger affection than he ever felt for woman, confiding in him, at this critical moment, with a confidence due to God only, obeying him with an implicit devotion parallel to that of Abraham, and dreaming that neither death nor fate could hurt him, if only under his protection."

[1] Lettere di T. Tasso (Guasti), vol. i. p. 275.

He came to Ferrara accordingly, under the care of Gualengo, Alphonso's ambassador at Rome; who is by some accused of having, at his master's command, lured him back by false promises,—scarcely needful to one so ready to believe his own hopes. And, at first, those hopes were realised. Tasso was well received by the Duke and his sisters, and, according to his own account, treated even with an excess of honour;[1] his enemies seemed to fall before him, and Alphonso to know his true worth at last. Then came a sad change. The Duke (possibly from kind motives) wished him to forsake his studies and give himself up to enjoyment,—a degradation resisted by Tasso, as he tells us, with the memorable words that "sooner would he prefer to be servant to some prince who was his patron's enemy than consent to such an indignity." Alphonso, too, perchance despairing, in its author's present mood, of the publication of the "Jerusalem," seems to have committed its manuscript to other hands. Tasso's remonstrances and reproaches appear to have closed against him the apartments of the Princesses and the Duke's audience-chamber. "At last," such is his own account, "my infinite patience was conquered; and, leaving behind me my books and writings, after a thirteen years' service, persevered in with an unhappy constancy, I went forth an exile to Mantua."

Here no one was kind to him but the young Prince, so he went on to Padua and to Venice; from which last place the Tuscan ambassador reported his case to his master as one of a person unquiet in mind, who, though not to be called sane, showed more marks of affliction

[1] See his letter to the Duke of Urbino, *loc. cit.*

than of madness, and who would be thankful to live and write at Florence under the grand ducal protection. The reply to this request was, that Francis did not wish for a lunatic at his Court.

But almost before the Grand Duke's message could reach Venice, Tasso had left that city for Pesaro, where he employed himself in composing a long justification of his conduct, addressed to his former friend, the Duke of Urbino, and afterwards extensively circulated throughout Italy—of a surety, to Alphonso's displeasure; who, most likely, began now to think Tasso a dangerous person to be left at large, and to devise means for getting him again into his power.

A benevolent despot may easily be turned into a malevolent one, when one whom he thinks he has befriended announces publicly, in language forcible as that of an ancient oration, that the contest between himself and his patron is in truth the old one "between right and wrong, justice and violence, humanity and impiety." Nor could the little Court of Ferrara feel easy when its late brightest ornament bewailed in far-reaching tones of eloquent pathos his miserable condition, "despoiled of fortune and country, a wanderer in peril and privation, betrayed by friends, abandoned by patrons, tormented by painful memories of the past, present troubles, and fears of the future; miserable, because my goodwill has been met by hatred, my sincerity by fraud, and my generosity by baseness; most miserable in this, that I am hated because I have been injured, yet cannot even gain goodwill by loving those who have wronged me; that when I can pardon deeds, others cannot even pardon my words; and that, though

I can forget the injuries I have received, others cannot even forget those which they have inflicted on me."

But prose was a defective vehicle, after all, for Tasso's sensations in this day of his uttermost desolation. The tears which had responded scantily to the call of duty over noble or imperial biers, flowed freely now over the poet's own sad fate; and one of the most touching of his odes, in which he seems to call his long-buried parents to console their afflicted son, is the result,—an ode made the more touching by the fact that its writer's grief did not suffer him to complete it.

"ODE AT URBINO.

1.

"Child of great Apennine!
River,[1] if small yet far renowned,
More glorious, than by waters, through thy name,—
I these thy banks benign
A flying pilgrim seek: their courteous fame
Make good; let rest and safety here be found.
And may that Oak[2] which thou dost bathe, whose frame,
Fed well by thy sweet waters, stretches wide
Its branches, seas and mountains shadowing,
O'er me its safe shade fling!
Thou sacred shade, which hast to none denied
'Neath thy cool leaves a hospitable seat,
Now 'mid thy thickest boughs receive and fold me;
Lest that blind, cruel goddess should behold me,
Who spies me out, though blind, in each retreat,
Albeit I crouch to hide in mount or vale,
And lit by moonbeams pale,
At midnight ply on lonely track my feet;

[1] The Metaurus.

[2] The crest (Robur) of the Delle Roveri, dukes of Urbino.

Yet with sure aim her darts still wound, and show
Her eyes as arrows keen to work my woe.

2.

Ah me! from that first day,
That I drew breath, and opened first
Mine eyes to this, to me still troubled light,
I was the mark, the play
Of evil, lawless Fate; whose hand accursed
Gave wounds that longer years have scarce set right.
This knows that glorious Siren bright,[1]
Beside whose tomb me the soft cradle pressed:
Ah! would that at that first envenomed wound
I there a grave had found!
Me cruel Fortune from my mother's breast
Tore, yet a child; ah! those fond kisses
Bathed by the tears that sheds her anguish,
I here, with sighs remembering, languish,
And her warm prayers—prayers that the wind dismisses;
For not again might I lay face to face,
Clasped in that close embrace
By arms the treasury of my infant blisses:
Thenceforth, like Trojan boy,[2] or Volscian maid,[3]
My weak steps followed where my father strayed.

3.

I 'mid those wanderings grew,
In exile bitter and hard poverty,
And sense untimely of my sorrows gained;
For ripeness, ere 'twas due,
Mischance and suffering brought to me,
Sad wisdom learning while my heart was pained.
My sire's weak age despoiled, his wrongs sustained,
Must I narrate? Does not my proper woe
Make me so rich, that no more store I need
Whereon my grief to feed?

[1] Parthenope. [2] Ascanius. [3] Camilla.

Whose case, save mine, should bid my tears to flow?
My sighs are all too few for my desire:
Nor can my tears, though in abundance given,
Equal my pain. Thou, who dost view from heaven,—
Father, good father, unto God now nigher—
I wept thee sick and dead, this know'st thou well,—
With groans my hot tears fell
Thy bed, thy tomb upon; but now, raised higher
To endless joys, I honour thee, not mourn;
My whole grief pouring on my state forlorn."
(*The rest is wanting.*)

Perhaps Tasso's hasty departure for Piedmont interrupted this sad canticle. He evidently received no encouragement to remain at Pesaro; and he thought he would be safer under the protection of the House of Savoy. On his way to Turin in the vintage season, he was kindly received by a country gentleman; whose son, returning from the chase, invited him to take a night's lodging in his father's house, rather than try to ford a river swollen by the September rains. The whole scene stands out clear and peaceful as the introduction to Tasso's dialogue, "The Father of a Family."

Less kind was his reception at the gates of Turin; at which, for want of a clean bill of health, he was at first refused admittance, which, however, a chance-coming friend obtained for the meanly dressed stranger. Once inside the city, the Marquis Philip of Este lodged him in his own house, where he was happy for a while; and, with the mobility of his southern nature, tuned his lyre, of late so doleful, to more cheerful notes, as he watched with well-pleased eyes the Marchioness's five fair gentlewomen moving in the mazy dance. Those who build massive edifices of conjecture on Tasso's com-

plimentary verses to princesses and ladies of high degree, should notice the terms in which he apostrophises the fairest of this quintette:—

1.

"But yet among you shines
One brighter than the rest,
Like Love's own planet unto hearts adoring,
Which as the day declines
Shows brighter in the west:
Then, before red and golden dawn upsoaring,
Sweet dews keeps ever pouring
From eyes of light;
Each herb and flower
Makes fair that shower,
The earth seems sprinkled o'er with diamonds bright:
To thee mine eyes, O star,
I turn, who day's gates openest and dost bar.

2.

The rest I gladly praise,
But thee I court and sing,
Mark as thou art of both my thoughts and eyes.
I circle round thy rays,
And ask of grace one thing,
That never wrath thy charms from me disguise.
Thou wit canst fertilise
By thy soft ray,
And drought so cure
By dews most pure
That April's flowers turn straight to fruits in May,
Wherewith men decorate
Thine altars on high days of festive state."

While so diverting himself, Tasso continued to correspond with Cardinal Albano, through whose intercession he hoped to recover his patron's lost favour.

After a time a favourable opportunity seemed to offer. The Duke was about, for the third time, to enter the married state: the chosen bride was a Mantuan princess, Margaret Gonzaga, his last wife's niece. Tasso hoped to be allowed to greet her with a Marriage Ode; and, in honour of her wedding, to be restored to his lost post at Court. Cardinal Albano, whether mistaking Alphonso's mind in the matter, or wilfully deceived by him, or by some person in his confidence, encouraged Tasso to return. He came to Ferrara, February 21, 1579, two days before the joyous entry of the young Princess. He was ill received; the necklace of pearls of verse which he had strung together as his bridal offering was either never presented to her or despised; the promises to which he trusted were not performed, and he found the Duke's mind "much hardened against him." In less than a month his patience failed him; and in a fit of frenzied rage, he was heard by many to curse his days passed in serving an ungrateful master, to retract the praises which he had bestowed on him and his, and, in short, to use language violent enough to sting Alphonso to vigorous action. He probably thought himself clement when he decided on treating the refractory poet as mad instead of criminal, and ordered him to be shut up in the hospital of Santa Anna, the Bedlam of Ferrara.

CHAPTER V.

TASSO'S IMPRISONMENT.

On the causes of Tasso's imprisonment volumes have been written, and all sorts of theories advanced. That its immediate occasion was not the homage paid by him to either of the two Princesses, Alphonso's sisters,—approved of as that had been by the husband of one and the brother of both,—we may safely conclude. Italian jealousy, when roused, struck swiftly and secretly; and Tasso's reverential admiration for Leonora had been an acknowledged fact for many years, safely fenced round as it was by disparity of age and station, and by the lady's own lofty character. Still Alphonso may have been persuaded by the courtiers, who were destroying his old regard for Tasso, to consider compliments, once found pleasing, such as Sophronia's story, as impertinences; and Leonora herself may have been stung to anger by hearing that whispers had been circulated against her fair fame on account of a man who was all the time transferring his devotion from her to another, and may have been hindered at once by wounded feeling and by fear of scandal from interposing actively in his behalf. More potent, in the opinion of many

good judges, was Tasso's unlucky negotiation with the Medicean princes. Yet if its discovery, which undoubtedly cost him his master's good graces, had made the Duke at once resolve on such a cruel revenge, it is hard to see why he did not execute it sooner; and why he twice allowed his victim to escape from the toils which, as some think, he slowly wound round him, driving him by fiendish arts into insanity. Perhaps the simplest explanation may be the truest,—that the Duke had come to regard Tasso as a person of unsound mind, whose hatred might, through his brilliant talents, be dangerous; that, so long as he could keep his grasp on his poem and its complimentary dedication, he cared not much what became of the author; but that rather than reattach him to himself by rewards which he was perhaps unable, and certainly unwilling, to bestow, or than suffer him to depart from Ferrara for the third time in a tempest of wrath which might echo throughout Italy, he readily believed, and willingly acted on, the report of Tasso's madness—a report which there were undoubtedly fair grounds for believing, and which the poet's own want of prudence and ungoverned anger had done their best to confirm.

Be it as it may, Tasso's imprisonment of seven years and four months, during most of which time his sanity was patent to all fair investigators, has left an indelible blot on Alphonso's character—blacker to the public eye, from the greatness of the victim, than even the stain which worse actions still have marked it with. The first part of it was the severest. He complains that neither confessor nor physician paid him a visit for many months,—a most suspicious proof that Alphonso did not

sincerely believe him mad. His loneliness, the thirst which he endured, the cries of the unhappy madmen near, all aggravated his sufferings. Manso speaks of his comfortable rooms at Santa Anna; but it is to be feared that the best apartments there could only be called so by way of comparison,—and he did not occupy the best in his first two years of seclusion. Others again describe his cell as a dark dungeon, which was shown to Lord Byron when he visited Ferrara; but this tradition is refuted, as by other evidence, so by the fact that long elaborate letters in his own defence, as well as philosophic dialogues, date from the first years of his imprisonment; his interesting confessions to Scipio Gonzaga from its second month. Mosti, the prior of the hospital, was unkind to him; but his nephew Julius showed him the tenderest regard, transcribed and transmitted his letters, and did all in his power to alleviate his sufferings. And after the first few years he was better lodged and better treated, received more visits, and was even allowed to pay some; permitted under surveillance to witness the carnival, and to attend the different churches. Still, at the best, a bare lodging in a madhouse was a sad change from the rich arras and free outlook of a palace chamber; and none can think without compassion of the solitary confinement (a trial to the soundest mind), the harshness of keepers, the unhealthy atmosphere, and of all the gloom which so suddenly darkened such a brilliant life at the early age of thirty-five; or hear unmoved the cries of distress which, in eloquent prose, or in verse full of force and pathos, resound from Tasso's living tomb.

Of this last is his address to Alphonso, poetically exaggerated we may hope; but yet, it is to be feared, in

the main a faithful picture of his state. It begins in an abject tone of supplication, assuring the author of his sufferings—

"With thee, to thee, *not of thee* I complain;"

and then it goes on to implore him to regard them with some pity.

1.

"Ah! turn thy clement eyes,
And see among the poor
Sick herd by human pity gathered here,
Where thy pale servant lies
Groaning with pain worse than they all endure.
See death upon his face appear,
'Mid griefs unnumbered mark his cheer,
His hollow eyes and dim;
While prison-dust unclean,
And anguish, weak and lean
Weary and fainting makes his every limb;
Ready to envy basest mate
Whom pity comforts still in lowliest estate.

2.

Pity is dead for me,
And courtesy has gone astray,
Unless in thee, Lord, they revive once more," &c.

Still more affecting is his address to the Ladies Lucretia and Leonora, in which the woes of the present stand out black indeed against the bright background of the pleasures of the past enjoyed in their company. Did this appeal ever reach the ears for which it was intended? and if so, how could they hear it and make no response?

1.

. . . . . .

"To you of my distress
I tell, and weep, the mournful history;

And to your minds the memory
Recall of what I was, you were,
While, honoured and held dear,
I spent beside you many a year,—
The hideous present and the past so fair ;
My need, my state, my guide to this dark cell,
My trust betrayed, hope mocked,[1] alas ! ah let me tell.

2.

These things, oh progeny
Of heroes, children great of kings
And glorious, weeping I to you recall :
And, if words seem to be
Scanty, my tears from springs
Abundant, as my sorrow bids, shall fall.
The lyres, the trumps, the garlands, all
I, wretched, weep ; and weep beside
Study, disport, and feast,
In palace-hall or gallery rest,
Where first I served, then sat your comrade tried,—
All gone from me with liberty and health,
An outlaw now, alas ! from nature's commonwealth.

3.

Me who, ah me ! divides
From rights still left to Adam's race ?
What Circe bids me herd with beasts, not men ?
The bird in tree that hides
'Mid boughs, has happier place ;
The beast, ah me ! rests better in his den.
For nature rules in wood and glen,

---

[1] These expressions give some slight colour to Manso's express declaration, that it was a letter of Leonora's that decided the poet's first return to Ferrara from Sorrento. If such was the case, however, respect for his Princess sealed his lips to all but this covert complaint; as in his prose account of the matter he wholly ignores any such encouraging epistle.

And waters pure, and fresh, and good,
Hands to them from the fount;
And on them meadow, hillock, mount,
Bestow unpoisoned, healthful, ready food;
On them the free heaven shines, on them the breeze
Blows freshening,—them the sunbeams warm and cheer,
and please.

4.

I erred; I merit pain:
I erred, this I confess; yet still
My tongue[1] sinned, now my heart the fault denies;
Pity I seek to gain:
Ah! if from you mine ill
Find none, whose heart shall move my miseries?
If you are deaf unto my cries,
Who, who for me will supplicate
In my adversity?
Ah, should there discord 'twixt you be
And diverse wills in this my need so great,
Like Mettius, torn asunder 'twixt you twain,
Sad spectacle of woe, let me for aye remain.

5.

But no! that concert rare
(Your beauty) which your virtues make,
Let now for me its beauteous harmony
Move unto pitying care
That Lord, for whose dear sake
My fault more than my pains is grief to me,
Alas! though hot and fierce they be:
So that to titles great and high
Wide spreading his renown,

---

[1] Tasso, here as elsewhere, seems to know of no cause for his imprisonment but the rash vituperations which he so abundantly retracts. Does his hint further on, of possible discord between the sisters on his account, imply that he had now greater hopes from Lucretia than from the offended Leonora, or the reverse?

To each well-purchased laurel-crown,
To trophies decked and mounting towards the sky,
He to so vast heap add one honour more,—
His pardon who once wronged, but ever will adore."

Certainly this abasement of a great genius at the feet of a tyrannical Italian prince is not a pleasant sight; but Tasso's whole after-conduct showed that his respectful affection for the hand which smote him so cruelly was no fiction. To understand how this was possible, we must remember that he had been brought up to serve in Courts, and could scarcely imagine life under any other conditions; that Alphonso's kindness to him had been great in former years, while his present ill-treatment might appear to him as rather the work of his Ministers than of their master; and that he was conscious of having wronged his benefactor, at least by words.

But whatever may have been the reality of Tasso's repentance for a fault into which he had been hurried by the Duke's ill-treatment, its expression did not soften Alphonso. He contented himself with securing his main object, the publication of the "Jerusalem Delivered," with its dedication to himself unaltered; and, after that, seems to have troubled himself little about its unfortunate author. We have seen how small pains he took to effect the cure which was the pretext of Tasso's seclusion; he took as little to secure him his just profits from the sale of his great poem, which kept enriching others while its writer remained in penury, and spreading his fame to the remotest regions while he continued a lonely captive. The Duke does not seem to have interfered with Tasso's liberty of writing books or letters; but, either too proud to acknowledge his mistake, or really believing in his

victim's madness, he, while granting various privileges and alleviations, still refused to open the prison-doors, till he was at last forced to do so by the universal indignation, and by intercessions too powerful to be resisted.

Lucretia seems to have approved of the course taken by her brother. Of Leonora it is more hard to speak; for her health, never good, was now failing—the more rapidly, some may suppose, on account of her rejected intercession for her poet; and she died before Tasso had been two years in prison. But her feelings have not been disclosed to us. In November 1580 Tasso addressed to her and her sister a collection of his minor poems, "as a sign that neither the malignity of men, nor his ill-fortune, had taken from him either his knowledge of their worthiness, or his desire to serve and honour them." To this he added a discourse, mentioning them honourably,[1] on "Feminine Virtue." But it is doubtful whether Leonora ever saw either, ill as she now was.

Of this dangerous malady word was at length brought to Tasso, who thereupon begged the great preacher, Panigarola, to tell her when she recovered that he "had grieved much to hear of her sufferings, which he

[1] These are his words: "He who demands in heroic women not only the virtue of action but also that of contemplation, should remember Rénée of Ferrara and Margaret of Savoy, of both of whom my father used to tell me wonders; and the daughters of Rénée, Anna, Lucretia, and Leonora, are such both in their understanding of affairs of state, and in their judgment of letters, that no one can hear them speak without being filled with the greatest amazement; and, whensoever I have read a composition of my own to any one of them, I judged that I had for a listener, not Sappho, Corinna, Diotima, or Aspasia (comparisons too mean for them), but the mother of the Gracchi herself, or such another as she." Serassi thinks that this compliment softened Lucretia, and that Tasso owed to it some slight marks of pity and interest from her in his misfortune.

had not wept in verse on account of a certain silent repugnance of his genius; but that, if he could serve her in any other matter, she must command him, and should find him most ready to obey her, especially in more cheerful themes for poetry."

If Panigarola awaited Leonora's convalescence, this message was never delivered to her. She died February 10, 1581, leaving behind her a high character for wisdom and sanctity. Her friends felt reconciled to her departure by the long sufferings, borne with great patience, which they had witnessed, in the midst of which they had seen "that happy soul supremely desiring to depart hence and unite itself to its Redeemer."[1] Her death was, according to the custom of the time, bewailed in much elegiac verse by the poets of Italy. One name, and that the greatest, was wanting to the list of mourners. Tasso kept silence. He avoided, as his message to the Princess showed, mournful subjects of verse on principle, lest they should augment the "melancholy" or bring on the "frenzy" of which he often complains. And he would not break through the rule even on this occasion, either from displeasure at what he might think was Leonora's indifference to his woes, or from fear of yet further displeasing Alphonso; or, as is more agreeable to believe, because his was a sorrow too deep for expression in verse.

It is remarkable that when Montaigne came to see him four months earlier, when the news of Leonora's malady may have reached him, he found him too ill and too dejected to converse; so that the French essayist departed with the belief that Tasso was "no longer

[1] Cardinal Albano's consolatory letter to her brother.

cognisant either of himself or of his works." For such was far from being the imprisoned poet's usual state. More generally visitors and correspondents found him ready to defend his "Jerusalem" against criticisms, willing to look at the poems of others, even of young beginners, in a friendly spirit, and alike disposed to discourse on the rules of his art, or to engage in philosophic or theologic discussion. He also took pleasure in looking at designs which artists sometimes brought him for the illustration of his great poem, now acquiring a European reputation. His design to write other epics was never carried out. It may be that Alphonso's severity deprived the world of them; but this is scarcely probable. Tasso's genius ripened early, and won its greatest triumphs first. The poetic faculty began to wither in him as he attained middle life, while he put forth new powers in a different direction. Henceforward prose dialogues, orations of remarkable eloquence, and discourses on various subjects, were his most noticeable works. Verse he continued indeed to manufacture in large quantities to oblige correspondents, and to seek to interest powerful intercessors; but its quality naturally deteriorates. What else could be expected from an author who thus frankly expresses himself to one of the numerous applicants: "Whosoever asks me for sonnets, odes, or other compositions, sets the dearest price he can on his goodwill, for this is the only coin that I have left —gold or silver as you please to think it, not copper surely, or you would not ask for it; . . . but before it can be dug out of the mine of my sterile genius, before it gets hammered and stamped with the Prince's image, it costs me much time and much fatigue." Once

he half demurred, when asked for a poem in a lady's praise; vexed to think how calmly the Italian women were taking the imprisonment of the poet to whom they owed Sophronia, Clorinda, and Herminia. But knightly feeling prevails, and he writes: "My father used to say that men nobly born ought not to keep up any enmity with women; and, although I consider myself to have been disfavoured by all the gentlewomen of Italy, and not less than by the rest by that lady whom you ask me to praise, I nevertheless ought not, and wish not, to refuse your request."

Marphisa of Este, Alphonso's cousin, and the wife of the Marquis of Massa and Carrara, did what she could, it must be said, to make this reproach undeserved. Mindful of Tasso's verses on her marriage, she showed the imprisoned poet every kindness in her power, and did her best to procure his release. His dialogue on "Love" commemorates a discourse he held with her and various noble ladies at her country-house, where Alphonso permitted him to spend one day; and several sonnets on the birth of her children, display Tasso's grateful sense of her kindness.

Sometimes, though rarely, he still sounded the lyre on his own account—in his appeal, for instance, to Time to clear his repute before men:—

"Old and winged God! born with the sun undying
At one same birth, and of the stars the mate;
Who all things dost destroy and renovate
In twisted course now back, now forward flying;
My heart that sick in languid pain is lying,
Nor, of the cruel cares that vex its state,
One thorn, though labouring long, can extirpate,
Has none save thee to still its tears and crying,

Do thou uproot ill thoughts, oblivion sweet
Shed o'er my wounds ; and bid away to flee
False images from palace-chambers : then
Truth, from those depths where she lies plunged, to meet
Our sight raise veilless, shadowless ; till see
Her naked beauty all the sons of men."

Or again, very beautifully, when death had enabled him to judge Leonora more justly, and the remembrance of all she had been to him rose like a clear, pale star over the troubled sea of his life, he thus invokes her :—

"That noble flame that once consumed this heart,
Where I its ashes hide and safe retain,
On earth is quenched ; but, lit in heaven again,
'Mid stars, in things eternal has its part.
Thence I behold its love-bright sparkles dart
When night dispreads her veil of dusky grain,
Scattering around her chilly dewdrop rain,
And feel its warmth from thence. Oh, Thou who art
A fair star now, if thy sweet light once swayed
My dubious course, to it for beacon given,
While, mortal yet, thou this our earth didst tread,—
Immortal now, and far more beauteous made,
Guide me, amid the rocks where I am driven,
To quiet port from out these waters dread."

It was not often that Tasso was so inspired. Much of his time was spent in letters designed to procure his release, directed to Cardinal Albano, on the faith of whose assurance he had returned to Ferrara, to the Emperor, and to one influential person after another.[1] All

[1] One of the most affecting of these appeals was addressed to Leonora, Duchess of Mantua, in the name of her defunct sister, whom he had celebrated both in prose and verse. "Barbara, a queen by birth, demands Tasso, and wishes him to live, not only to his patrons and friends, but to himself, to his studies and his comfort ; for she, being now where this world's glory is nothing esteemed, seeks it not, but

were fruitless; and yet the hope which they kept alive in the prisoner's breast, and the vague promises which he received from some of his correspondents, helped him to live through the sad and dreary time.

At last real light began to break through the darkness. A worthy Benedictine monk, of a noble Genoese family —Don Angelo Grillo—earnestly undertook his cause, consoled Tasso by visits, letters, and presents,[1] and wrote really efficacious letters on his behalf. It was time; for the prisoner's mind was vexed by all kinds of hypochondriacal fancies,—imaginations that he had been bewitched, ideas of being haunted by mischievous sprites, and the like. These, concurring with religious feeling deepened by solitary meditation, and by experience of the emptiness of earthly things, produced at last a wondrous vision, which he hoped might be real, though he scarcely dared to believe in it. After describing, in a letter dated December 30, 1585, his many painful sensations during a dangerous illness—the lights which flashed before his eyes, and the sound of bells and clocks in his ears, in the darkness and stillness of his nights—he adds: "Amid so many terrors and pains, there appeared to me in the air the image of the glorious Virgin, with her Son in her arms, surrounded by a rainbow; whence I ought not to despair of her grace. And although it may easily have been a fantasy, . . . yet I ought rather to believe it to have been a miracle."

yet does not despise gratitude. Barbara prays, Barbara supplicates: who can refuse me to Barbara? Who would be chary towards Barbara of grace and favour?"

[1] One of these was an emerald ring, the gift of Angelo's brother; which, Tasso said, had been a thing he had long wished for in vain, "so small are my obligations to fortune and to men's courtesy."

Happily the succeeding summer saw Tasso set at liberty,—shattered both in mind and body, but in time to preserve his reason from a total shipwreck. The city of Bergamo had interceded for him at the close of 1585, and presented Alphonso with an inscription which he was anxious to possess; without, however, obtaining at once the desired effect. Pope Sixtus V. himself sent a message to Alphonso in his favour, in the March of 1586. At last the Prince of Mantua prevailed on the Duke to commit Tasso to his care; and, under a promise to be answerable for his safe keeping, he took him to his father's Court. They left Ferrara on July 13, 1586, without Tasso being admitted to kiss Alphonso's hand—a favour he had earnestly desired; and after nearly twenty-one years spent as a servant or prisoner of the house of Este, Tasso, at the age of forty-two, was at last free, if he so pleased, to "live in that lettered leisure which teaches us to despise death, and any life disjoined from immortality,"—and could look forward to enjoying not only the agreeable readings which had been the consolation of his imprisonment, but "innocent games, pleasant jokes, the comfort of friends, ease, entertainment, and sports suitable to the season and to the moderate desires of an invalid."[1] Such was the life he had sketched out for himself more than a year before; such the retirement of a wounded spirit, shrinking from men's eyes, which the sonnet addressed somewhere about this time to Raphael Roncione seems to long for :—

"Like bird, shot through in middle flight, I fell,
And therefore ceased to sing my wonted rhyme,

[1] Lettere, vol. ii., No. 342.

Raphael, which Nilus and Euphrates' clime,—
Not Po alone (where falls are fated),[1]—tell.
Now, weak and frail through that shock terrible,—
Not in arcade, or theatre sublime,
But in cool cave and shade, I spend my time,
And when it thunders tremble much. 'Twere well
For me, 'mid friendly trees, the calm day's dawn
To wait, where waters sweet from fountain clear
Might quench my thirst; while their deep murmurs meet
And answer Procne's notes from neighbouring lawn,
And my lament: while the name ever dear,
For which I tune my voice, its waves repeat."

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[1] Tasso's favourite reference to the fall of Phaëton on the bank of the Eridanus (Po) as a foreshadowing of his own.

CHAPTER VI.

TASSO'S AFTER-WANDERINGS.

MANTUA, at first, seemed a delightful abode to Tasso. The young wife of Prince Vincenzo, Leonora—a Tuscan princess—paid him especial honour. Her husband had him handsomely dressed, and lodged and attended in his own house; where the fish and game, the good meat and fruit, the excellent bread and sharp-tasted wines, "which my father used to like,"[1] were a pleasant change after the prison fare of Ferrara. For a while it seemed as though the house which had sheltered the last days of Bernardo Tasso would, in like manner, protect all his son's declining years; and one of Torquato's first occupations at Mantua was alike a graceful compliment to the old duke for his kindness to both, and a sign of his own love for his father's memory,—the completion of Bernardo's unfinished poem "Floridante"—a sort of continuation of his "Amadis,"—and its dedication to his ancient patron.

To please the young Princess, he finished the drama begun long before at Ferrara, under the name of "Galealto, King of Norway;" and changing its title to "Tor-

[1] Lettere, vol. iii. p. 637.

rismondo," and studying Sophocles as his model, accomplished a play which, in the singular dearth of fine tragedies in Italy, has always occupied a high rank in his own country.

Its publication added to his fame: so did that of more dialogues and discourses, and of some of his letters. On the whole, we may say that the year spent at Mantua was a happy one. And the second year of Tasso's freedom opened well. His relation, the Cavaliere Tasso, sent his coach to conduct him in state to the great fair at Bergamo;[1] where he was heartily welcomed, early in August 1587, by numerous friends and kinsmen, and made the acquaintance of that fair Lelia, who had bewitched his cousin Hercules, and made him recant his declarations against matrimony—whose union with him he had saluted by an epithalamium, and also by an eloquent letter, rising to the dignity of an oration, in praise of marriage[2]—and who now did her best to repay the celebrity, which had been his wedding-gift to her, by her delightful conversation.

But on the 24th of August the old Duke of Mantua died; and Tasso thought it his duty to return to pay his respects to his son and successor, whom he found too busied with affairs of state to give him speedy audience. He seems to have feared that the new duke's former

[1] Dear to him, as he says, as the birthplace of his celebrated father—

"Who amid arms still graceful poems sang."

[2] It contains this exquisite sentence: "The beauty which appears in the face is nothing else but the splendour of the victorious soul, which, having overcome all that opposed itself to it, as the sun dissolves the clouds, shines forth in the eyes and paints the face with colours more lovely than are those we admire in the rainbow; for, as the iris is the token of the sun's victory, after the same manner is grace the certain proof of that of the soul."

regard for him had died away; besides, he had for some months been thinking of a sojourn at Rome, under the protection of several friendly Cardinals,—the wish, too, to know that he was not only free at Mantua, but free to leave it, seems to have had its effect; and the result of these combined causes was, that he asked Duke Vincenzo's permission to perform a vow of long-standing at Loretto, and proceed from thence to Rome. The Duke did not think it needful to interpret his own promise to Alphonso very strictly, and so did not refuse leave: still, perhaps wishing it to appear as rather taken than given, he gave Tasso no encouragement to depart, and no supplies for his journey,—on which he would have fared badly had it not been for convent hospitality, and the kindness of friends. He reached Loretto the last day of October; forgot the philosopher in the penitent at the sight of its holy house; and communicated there, with many tears and the greatest compunction at the remembrance of his youthful transgressions. Mindful of the vision with which he had been favoured in prison, he devoutly addressed the blessed Virgin in an ode, which begins—

> "Lo! 'mid the tempests and fierce gusts of wind
> That sweep our life's wide trackless sea,—
> O holy Star! me has thy splendour guided," &c.

and went on to Rome, where he was well received by Cardinal Gonzaga (as he shortly afterwards became); —under whose kind auspices the city seemed to him "beautiful and courteous as he had expected." He was in time to celebrate, by an ode, the friendly Scipio's promotion, which followed on December 18; and might, it should seem, have passed many peaceful days at Rome,

in spite of the Duke of Ferrara's complaints that he had been suffered to leave Mantua, and Cardinal Albano's resentment of his own disregarded counsel to remain there. But the restlessness which had now become a confirmed habit of his mind impelled him forward: he wished to see his sister and her second husband; he was anxious to recover his share of his mother's dowry; and in March 1588 he went to Naples.

He there heard that his sister was dead: this was why he had received no answer to a touching letter, written shortly after he reached Rome, in which he had told her that his body was sick with many diseases, his mind weakened, his fortune more adverse than ever; neither friend nor patron left such as he could wish for; that his Lombard kinsmen had given him up;[1] and that she alone was left to him. "Oh," he goes on passionately, "may you at least be alive, so that I may come, I say not to enjoy, but to breathe, the air of that heaven under which I was born; to be cheered by the sight of the sea and the gardens; to console myself by your affection. . . . How great would be my obligation to the mercy of God for reserving me to die in your arms, and not in those of the attendants in a hospital!"

But though this prayer was not granted, yet the homeless man found many ready to welcome him in Naples,—so many that, rather than offend friend or relative, Manso says, he sojourned in the monastery of Mount Olivet. It was now that his first biographer—whose memoirs of this part of his life at least are authentic—(in old age the friend and correspondent of Milton, as in youth of Tasso)

[1] Let us hope, after his recent affectionate reception at Bergamo, that this was a mere fancy.

Manso, Marquis della Villa, and Lord of Bisaccio, made his acquaintance. It was to this last-named town that he went with his new friend, in October, for the vintage and autumn diversions,—after a summer spent in fruitless conferences with lawyers and physicians for the recovery of his lost property and health; in vain endeavours to prevent his "Familiar Letters" from being published without profit to himself; in the composition of a poem on the Order of Mount Olivet (left unfinished), which was written to please his kind entertainers; and in discussions with friends on the additions which he wished to make to his "Jerusalem." Manso's account of their holiday in the country is a pleasant one. "Signor Torquato," he writes, "has become a mighty hunter, and minds neither rough weather nor tracks. We spend bad days and our evenings in listening to music and singing; for he takes particular pleasure in hearing our improvisatori, envying them that readiness in versification of which, he says, nature has been so avaricious to himself. Sometimes we and the ladies here have a dance, which he also likes much; but oftenest we stay talking by the fire." And then follows an extraordinary account of confidential communications made to him by Tasso, about a spirit with which he believed himself to hold converse, and whom he promised to show to his friend. "But," says Manso, "when, after long looking fixedly at a window, he said to me, 'Behold the friendly spirit who has courteously come to discourse with me! look and you will see the truth of my words,' I, turning there at once, saw nought but the sunbeams through the casement. While I looked about me, seeing nothing, I however heard Torquato, who had entered into the profoundest

reasonings with some one." These reasonings, he adds, were on the deepest subjects, and expressed in an unusual manner. The replies he heard not, but could conjecture from Tasso's rejoinders; who, when the singular interview was over, asked him (but received an answer in the negative) whether it had removed his doubts. Then Tasso smiled himself; leaving Manso uncertain, as he does us, whether he had been mystifying his young admirer, or whether, in his long solitudes, his own mental abstractions had taken shapes which seemed wholly external to himself.

Tasso's return to Rome in the following December was cheered by the kindness of Nicholas degli Oddi, of the Roman convent of Mount Olivet; who, grateful for the poem in honour of his founder, helped Tasso through his difficulties at the custom-house, and always readily received him at Santa Maria Nuova. This was the more useful, as Tasso's hopes of apartments at the Vatican had been, so far, disappointed. Pope Sixtus showed no sign of wishing to honour in Tasso the singer of the triumphs of the cross,—not even admitting him to an audience until the following July. The verses written in his praise a year before had passed unnoticed; so, too, had Tasso's fine ode on his chapel of "The Holy Manger" in Santa Maria Maggiore. Let us hope, as there is good reason to do, that the neglected poet turned more and more for consolation in his poverty and growing bad health to Him in whose praise that ode was written; and that, disappointed in the servant, he thought only of the Master as, on this his second Christmas in Rome, he repeated to himself these stanzas; which, noble in themselves, gave Milton

hints of which he made yet a nobler use in his own great Ode on the Nativity :—

1.

" Heaven opens, and th' angelic splendours shine ;
Flashes from myriad shields,
Bright crowns, pure fires, adorn it with their light :
Yet, my soul, turn thine eyne
From those celestial fields
Whose lucid calm shines than the day more bright,—
From songs of choirs amid that radiance white,—
To view the crowd of shepherds mean,
At the strange glory and the song awaking ;
And that low dwelling where abides
Whom Night in shadow hides,—
With awe a sacred screen her mantle making,—
Of angels and of heaven the lofty Queen,
The old man at her side her joy partaking ;
The promised Birth adore
The ox and ass before ;
And see, within straight limits bounded,
Heaven's wonders by earth's miracle confounded.

2.

I seem to see each high Intelligence,
Ruler of heavenly sphere,
To honour it bid each man lay aside
The weapon of offence,
The standards waking fear ;
Far as from East to West the world spreads wide,
Hushing Mars' choirs flaming in furious pride.
Nor upon earth alone is peace
Closing of fabled Janus' house the portal,—
Firm peace is made 'twixt heaven and earth,
Now God as man has birth ;
Who shall, self-offered to the anguish mortal,
Bear the first sin's just doom and make it cease ;
Subdue our cruel foe with arms immortal

(That tyrant through whose lie
We all are born to die) ;
And make His cross His victory's token,
Ope Heaven, and leave Hell's gates o'erthrown and broken.

3.

Apollo now grows mute, his fount and grot,
Dumb those gods false and vain
Whose death his wiser song to men foretold ;
Daphne now answers not
From oak with accents plain ;
Now ends that spirit, whereby she lived of old,
By doom 'gainst idols in heaven's court enscrolled ;
Now Ammon weak and helpless lies
Where the strong south wind, desert-sands upraising,
Makes tempest as on stormy sea :
The car of Cybele,
Whereto she yoked her lion-team amazing,
By Mithras' fallen temple falls ; while flies
Or falls the Corybantes' troop, who, praising
Their Jove with cries around,
Made Crete and Ida sound ;
And, from their altars, sad are going
Apis, Anubis barking not, nor lowing.

4.

That truth whom the first Scriptures veiled, is sending
Around the world new light,—
Light that is Light of the great Light Eterne.
Nations, from far attending,
Run where that star shines bright,
Whose beams to point you out your Master burn :
With offerings, like the kings, to Him return,
Your God, your King, who yet must die ;
To Him sweet myrrh, fine gold, and incense, giving.
With shepherds praise, nor vanquished be
By their rude loyalty ;

With angels in the joyous chorus striving,
With all the mind knows dearest and most high,
Crown Him, as they, the Lord of dead and living.
Let equal joy inspire
Heaven's host and earthly choir,
Since very God, made man, now raises
By love our earth, while heaven bows down and praises."

The succeeding months do not seem to have been happy ones. Cardinal Gonzaga's coldness, and the insults of his dependants, vexed Tasso's susceptible heart increasingly throughout their course. And at last, one of these, George Alario by name, not content with intercepting the Duke of Mantua's gifts to the poet, during his master's absence, in August 1589, actually took it upon him to turn him out of his house.

So said, and doubtless thought, Tasso, who took refuge thereupon at Santa Maria Nuova; but as his was the nervous excitement which often takes fancies for facts, it is not now possible to say to what extent his imagination magnified or invented slights for him. Shortly before this occurrence we find him writing to his old friend the Duke of Urbino in a tone of profound dejection. "I have many causes for despair,—my inveterate malady, remedies and medicines which only harm me, lost opportunities, poverty, disfavour, the bad opinion entertained groundlessly by many of my disposition and habits, promises which have proved fallacious, the quiet of my studies disturbed, my actions impeded, and, in sum, both lives denied me with dread of a double death, —I mean, of the body and of the soul, for that of my name is less to be considered. . . . But yet, if faith,

piety, justice, and religion are not entirely dead or banished from the world, I may hope for some aid in my sickness, which is like a premature old age, and at least some consolation for my poverty."

Allowing for rhetorical exaggerations, these words disclose Tasso's very real afflictions. Considering the state of medical science in those days, the poverty which prevented him feeing more physicians, and being subject to more of their violent and exhausting methods of cure than he actually endured, was indeed an advantage; but it could not possibly appear such to him, so that disappointed hopes of recovery stand first on the list. Then the slow progress of his lawsuit might well afflict him; and he was hoping, through the Duke of Urbino, to obtain (as he did in the following October) the powerful intervention of the King of Spain to expedite it. The prospect of being independent at last, and of no longer having continually to solicit alms from the great, and pay dear for their help by degrading his poetic gifts to flattery, was one, the deferred realisation of which might well make Tasso's heart sick: much as long habit, and the bad customs of his age and country, may have hidden from him the true baseness of such a way of living. Last, but not least, this letter points to a constant source of disquiet in the "opinions" entertained of him by others. Tasso knew that while men admired his genius, they consoled themselves for any sense of inferiority by secretly despising him as half, or wholly, crazed; and he must have been painfully conscious that, by his long fits of depression which often made him bad company, and by his occasional delusions, he had given common minds only too good ground for doing so.

Take, for a specimen of them, Grazioso, agent in Rome to the Duke of Urbino, who sends a melancholy letter of Tasso to a mutual friend (in which the fear that he may have to die in an inn for lack of apartments elsewhere is expressed) to its intended recipient, with the following commentary: "Poor Tasso, after having dined in my house yesterday, set to work to write many letters, —this one among the rest. Shortly afterwards, Signor Fabio Orsino and other gentlemen coming in, curiosity made us open them all—so much do his things please even in his madness. You must show patience and compassion towards this poor fellow, who, with the exception of still speaking well, now knows neither what he says nor what he wants. We kept copies of all these letters. What compassion people ought to show him! . . . I add that this unfortunate man would be gladly welcomed, not merely by nobles, but by every private individual, both into their houses and into their hearts, but his humours make him distrust everybody. In the house of Cardinal Scipio Gonzaga there are apartments and beds always reserved for him alone, and men destined for his sole service; but he flies and distrusts even that lord. In sum, it is a great infelicity to this age, to be deprived of the whole of the greatest genius that many past ages have produced. What sage ever spoke, either in prose or in rhyme, better than this madman!" This letter bears date July 22, 1589, about a fortnight before Tasso's alleged expulsion from the Cardinal's house. Whether or not it lead the reader to exonerate his steward from the poet's charges, it will at least show us the trials to which Tasso's proud and sensitive spirit was exposed; and the sad impossibility of his getting that cloud dis-

persed which his own imprudence and Alphonso's cruelty had brought to overshadow his declining years. But these trials had their good effect. It is about this time that we find him writing, "If our faith in men proves false, faith in Christ at least cannot deceive us."

Tasso suffered much from fever during the succeeding autumn; part of the November of which he spent in the Bergamasque hospital at Rome, from unwillingness to burden the kind Olivetan fathers. Returning to Scipio Gonzaga's house in February, by invitation, he had cause to consider himself ill-used by his old friend; who, having allowed a relative to promise that he should be treated there like himself, neither admitted him to his own table (the sign so much insisted on of his rank as a gentleman which had been conceded to him in early youth at Ferrara) nor had him so lodged and attended as of old. This want of courtesy made him distrustful of the whole house of Gonzaga, so that he declined the favourable offers, procured for him from the Duke of Mantua by his friend Costantini, and accepted instead those sent him by the new Grand-Duke of Tuscany (formerly Cardinal de' Medici), accompanied as they were by a considerable sum of money to enable him to undertake the journey to Florence. He never again had to take refuge in a charitable institution; his outward course was brighter from this time forward; but increasing bad health made it in reality as melancholy as it had ever been.

Still his Tuscan visit was in many ways highly satisfactory to him. From Florence had come an ungenerous assault on his great poem, during the time of his imprisonment; when Salviati, its former eulogist, gratified

Alphonso's spite by professing to condemn it in the name of the Academy of La Crusca. The captive poet had found many defenders at the time, and had maintained his own cause, and that of his father,[1] involved in the same censure, in a grave and learned apology. But the enthusiastic reception which he met with alike from prince and people, the crowds which assembled to behold him, to point out to one another the great poet of Italy, and to pay him reverential homage, must have been peculiarly welcome to Tasso in Florence, as a proof that all enmity in that city either to himself or to his works had died with Salviati. We can trace a consequent revival of his spirits in the anecdote of his introducing himself to the architect Buontalenti, whom he met in the streets of Florence, with the flattering inquiry, "Are you that Buontalenti who is spoken of so highly for the marvellous inventions to which his genius daily gives birth? who devised those amazingly clever machines for Tasso's play?" and on receiving, along with a modest disclaimer of his praise, an answer in the affirmative, casting his arms round his neck with a sweet smile, and saying, "You are Bernardo Buontalenti and I am Torquato Tasso. Adieu, friend, adieu." But we also see the depression of spirits which in Tasso's case followed such momentary cheerfulness, and which was doubtless aggravated by the exhaustion caused by the

[1] The contemptuous way in which his father's poem was spoken of wounded Tasso more than the assaults on himself. In undertaking Bernardo's defence, he says: "I will not say, as did Socrates, that I am doing what the Athenian laws enjoin,—or yet the Roman; but rather what those of Nature command, which are eternal, and can be changed by the will of no man, neither yet can lose their authority by the change of kingdoms and empires."

heats of summer, in a contemporary letter dated August 4th, which speaks of Tasso as "still at Florence, and in a truly unhappy state of mind, since not even gladness itself would have the power to gladden him a little."

Early in September Tasso returned to Rome, which he found excited about the election of a successor to Sixtus V., in the person of Urban VII., who only survived his elevation to the pontificate twelve days. He rose from a sick-bed to salute with an ode Urban's successor, Gregory; for, as he truly said, he was more sure of being able to write than to live. He continued to receive presents from his princely friends; his eagerness to furnish his sideboard with plate at their expense is amusing; but the Grand-Duke's silver goblets, the silver basin which bespoke the gratitude of the Sicilian Tancred's descendant, and similar ornaments, were perhaps pleasant to the childlike fancy of the sick poet as remembrances of that Court life which he had finally abandoned, but had never ceased to love. The money presented to him in Florence he tried by economy to make sufficient for his needs,—"dressing," as he says, "less honourably than might befit one who was born a gentleman, and had no plebeian bringing up. I have hardly bought two couple of melons for my own pleasure in all last summer." Doctors and books are the chief expenses which he owns to. His biographer Serassi thinks that he was cheated by his servants; but, anyhow, it must have been hard for an invalid gentleman to live on praise, presents, and scanty supplies of money, doled out at uncertain intervals.

This continued poverty must have been one of the aggravating causes of Tasso's restlessness—a restlessness

which made him, weak as he was, yield at length to the persuasions of Costantini (who, as the Tuscan ambassador, had befriended him in prison), and pay a second visit in his company to Mantua, where Costantini was now high in favour with the Duke and Duchess. This journey, performed by easy stages in the February and March of 1591, had, as one result, "The Genealogy of the House of Gonzaga," composed by Tasso in one hundred and nineteen octaves, and celebrated for its account of the battle of the Taro. It was Tasso's last long poem on a secular subject.

Before long he wearied of the Mantuan palace, courteously as he was treated there, and kind as the Duchess ever was to him.[1] He pined for solitude, and disliked the restraints of Court life. "I know by experience," he wrote to a friend, "that in this my most lasting and unjust adversity of many years, I have had no securer, more comfortable, or more honourable refuge than this house. But I cannot change my end, although the means may vary; and I ought not, through desire of long life, to make a worse choice than I made in boyhood; for I have lived too long already at the beck and call of other men's fancy and convenience, and have never yet been able to live to myself, heedless of their favour. The gaiety or pleasures of youth are unfitted to my present age, and suit it no better than would the yellow or blue clothes which my mother used to make for me. It behoves me therefore both to clothe myself

[1] So late as April 1593, just two years before Tasso's death, we find him thanking her for the offer of two turquoises, and asking her to give him instead a ruby and pearl ring,—"to be my spousal ring, should I ever marry; and should that occasion not present itself, as a remedy against melancholy."

suitably, not only to the season but to my years, and to enjoy those things which may reasonably give pleasure to one in my case. And, if other occasions of it are refused me, I can at any rate find pleasure in the company of my books, which do not exclude me from the reasonings and (so to speak) the conversation of men better, nobler, and more honourable than myself."

So Tasso went back to Rome, where, in the mean time, Pope Innocent had succeeded Gregory; himself to fill St Peter's chair for two months, and to die with the dying year. Cardinal Albano had died while Tasso was at Mantua; but his secretary, Maurice Cataneo, the poet's old friend, received Tasso hospitably, and he had no cause again to set his face northward.

CHAPTER VII.

LAST YEARS AND DEATH.

Tasso spent the last three years of his life partly at Naples, but mostly at Rome. At Naples, the Prince of Conca (whose wish to have him as his guest on a former visit had been disappointed by the political fears of his father), now free to do as he liked, entertained him sumptuously, while Manso's house stood ever open to him. It stood, as its owner tells us, "on the enchanting shore of the sea, a little raised above the others, and surrounded by most beautiful gardens; which (when Tasso visited him in March), reclothed by the coming spring with fresh leaves and varied flowers, by their verdure and sweet scent, and yet more by the purity of the air, so recreated Torquato from his inveterate melancholy, that alike through this and through the liberty which he felt in that house, which he regarded not merely as that of a particular friend but as his own, he began to feel his health sensibly improved, and to look on himself as nearly well."

In these two houses Tasso laboured at the remodelling of his great poem, which, very considerably altered, appeared under the title of "Jerusalem Conquered" in

December 1593. As an illustration of the anxiety of Italian princes in those times to have their names associated with great writings, Manso's anecdote of the Prince of Conca is worth attending to. He tells us that, from his wish to have this work finished at, and dated for publication from, his house, the Prince had told a servant to watch the manuscript book which contained it constantly, and to see that it was not taken outside the palace. That Tasso, observing this, complained that he was no longer free; whereupon Manso at once set him at liberty by coming the next day and,—having taken the poet by one hand and his poem with the other, — conducting both to his own neighbouring house; the servant not daring to interfere with so great a personage as the Marquis della Villa. He adds that Conca good-naturedly took no offence at this, dined with him and Tasso next day, and continued to make the latter as welcome as before.

The "Jerusalem," as might be expected, was altered, not improved, by Tasso's late labours. They were directed to three ends: the first, that of making the poem more regular by the omission of some of its love episodes, and more historical by the introduction of a large number of details from the chronicles of the crusades—objects only attainable by sacrificing several of the loveliest passages in the "Jerusalem Delivered;" the second, that of making the poem more religious by interpolations like the paraphrase of Isaiah's sixtieth chapter in the account of the crusaders' first sight of Jerusalem, or Godfrey's dream of Paradise—interpolations which Tasso's weakening poetic power had no longer strength to fuse with the work of his earlier

days into a harmonious whole; the third, the omission of almost every complimentary reference to the house of Este. The young hero, Rinaldo of Este, is replaced by Riccardo; Sophronia and Olindo disappear, and the dedication to the "magnanimous Alphonso" is replaced by one to the nephew of the new Pope, Clement VIII., which includes a panegyric on his uncle. The Cardinal of St George, as Cinthio Aldobrandini soon became, loved Tasso's conversation, received him in his own palace, procured him apartments in the Vatican, and altogether well deserved this distinction at his hands.

The "Jerusalem" that bears his name excited much attention on its first appearance, and found critics who confirmed Tasso's fond belief in its superiority over its predecessor; but the Italian people were wiser. Not from it, but from the "Jerusalem Delivered," came the stanzas to which the Venetian gondolier loved to time his oar, or the litanies which even convicts were heard singing. The poem of Tasso's youth flourishes with undying popularity; the soberer production of his declining years finds seldom a curious reader to disturb the dust which has gathered on it.

It was, though late, not its author's latest effort. Conversing with Manso's mother, the pious Lady Victoria, at Naples, Tasso lent a ready ear to her counsel to undertake a poem on the subject of the Creation; and left it at his death, wanting indeed in the last finishing touches, but still in the main complete.

Meantime, evidences of Tasso's widespread fame kept reaching him from the most unexpected quarters. Sciarra, a noted leader of the bandits who infested the road from Naples to Rome, sent him word, as he went on his way

to the latter city, that he would gladly give him an escort and any other favour he might desire; and when these offers were declined, moved away to leave a safe passage for the great poet. The citizens of Capua registered his brief stay in their town, and promise of a longer visit, in their archives as a lasting honour. Only one Italian breast remained closed to the charm exercised everywhere else by Tasso's genius and misfortunes. Duke Alphonso, though entreated by Tasso more than once in his closing years for some token of reconciliation, and for permission to see his face once more, remained implacably dumb.

Other old patrons were removed by death. Cardinal Scipio Gonzaga did not see the poem, with which he had taken such pains in past years, reappear in its altered shape; for he preceded Tasso to the tomb by more than two years. Tasso's intention of honouring his memory both in verse and prose, is expressed in a letter of his to the faithful Costantini, in acknowledgment of a sonnet by the latter on the poet's portrait, in which he says that he was embellished past his own recognition. And then he adds these touching words: "I was much better pleased with your delineation of my misfortunes than of my virtues; because, of these you have said much more than you ought, of those much less than you might have done." Costantini's sonnet is as follows:—

"Friends, this is Tasso, Bernard's son; who nought
For mortal offspring cared, but gave to light
Children more glorious than the sun to sight,
Through art, through style, high genius, and deep thought.
In poverty and in long exile taught,
In school, in temple, and in palace bright

He lived ; then through wild lone woods took his flight,
Found land and sea with pain and peril fraught.
At death's own gate he knocked, yet death subdued
By forceful prose and by yet mightier song,—
Death, but not Fortune, enemy unkind.
His sole reward, for love and arms sung long,
And Truth revealed, destroyer of sin's brood,
Is the green laurel in his hair entwined."

Two lines in it Tasso changed—the eleventh and fourteenth ; making the eleventh assert that Fortune had succeeded in dragging him down to the lowest depths, and the fourteenth, that the world thought even his barren crown too much for him.

Such as it was, however, his Aldobrandini patrons felt a desire to place it on his head, not merely metaphorically but literally. Petrarch had been crowned with laurel at the Capitol ; and though the wreath had rested since his time on less worthy heads, yet it still seemed the highest honour that could be offered to a poet. The Cardinal of St George, anxious to tempt Tasso back from Naples, solicited it for him from his uncle the Pope, and summoned him to Rome, in the November of 1594, to receive it.

He entered the city in a sort of triumph, escorted by the servants of the two cardinals Aldobrandini. Led by them into Clement's presence, he heard, from what were to him the most august lips in Christendom, the flattering words : " We have destined for you the laurel crown, that it may receive as much honour from you as, in times past, it has conferred on others." And soon afterwards, if not wealth, yet competence, was placed within his reach. The Pope assigned him an annual pension of one

hundred ducats; and the lawsuit at Naples was ended by a compromise, by which the Prince of Avellino (into whose hands the goods claimed by Tasso had come) bound himself to allow him two hundred a-year for life.

But the eyes before which these pleasant prospects opened were about to be closed by death. Some time before Tasso's malady had made him "lose all hope in human aid, and place it in the divine help alone;" and say of a piece of news, "It has pleased, not gladdened me, for my desperate state of health admits not of any gladness." And shortly after 1595 began, it became doubtful whether the coronation, deferred first by the bad weather and then by the cardinal's illness, could take place, owing to the poet's growing weakness; while it was but too evident that of the pensions promised him in the February, he could live to receive but few instalments. The old saying, "What thou desirest in youth, in age shalt thou plentifully obtain," came sadly true in poor Tasso's case. In the premature old age which had overtaken him, —through the fast gathering twilight,—the long-wished-for independence, the early coveted honour, drew near in vain to the sick man's couch: the appetite had vanished ere the feast was prepared. A complimentary sonnet on his approaching coronation, by his cousin Hercules Tasso, was recited to him, and he answered by Seneca's "Magnifica verba mors prope admota excutit."

The three first months of the year passed in increasing weakness. On the 1st of April came the summons; and Tasso, presaging his end, requested to be taken to that monastery of St Onofrio on the Janiculum which the traveller still visits, not only for the fine view of Rome which it commands, but because there Tasso's long sor-

rows found their close. The fathers, seeing Cardinal Cinthio's coach making its way up the steep ascent on a wet and windy day, went forth to do honour to the visitor who came to them so recommended; and Tasso, alighting with difficulty, said to the prior that he had come there to die among them. On a few warm spring days yet he sat in the convent garden under the oak, the offshoot from which still bears his name; and heard Mass in the church, where his eye may have rested with pleasure on Peruzzi's and Pinturicchio's frescoes. Then the corridor near his room, with its beautiful Virgin and Child by Leonardo da Vinci, became too long a walk for his enfeebled strength; and he laid him down to die. But, before he did so, he indited one last letter,—not to prince or princess, reliance on whose favour had been the capital mistake of his life,—but to his faithful friend Costantini. It runs thus:—

"What will my Signor Antonio say when he hears of his Tasso's death? And in my opinion the news will not be long in coming, for I feel that I am at the end of my life, no remedy having been found for this my troublesome disease, added to my many other accustomed ones; by which, like a rapid torrent without anything to retain me, I clearly see myself being carried away. It is no longer the time to complain of my obstinate evil fortune, not to say of the world's ingratitude, which has resolved to have the triumph of leading me as a beggar[1] to my grave; when I had thought that the glory which (whoever may wish the contrary) this century will gain from my writings, would never have left me thus wholly unguerdoned. I have had myself transported to this monastery of St Onofrio—not only because the physicians

[1] He was dying before he could receive the promised pensions; and they were but small.

praise its air more than that of any other part of Rome, but that I may, as it were, begin from this eminent place, and in converse with these devout fathers, to have my conversation in heaven. Pray to God for me; and be sure that, as I have ever loved and honoured you in this present life, so in that other and truer one will I do for you all that appertains to charity, not feigned but real. And to the divine grace I recommend you and myself."

It was on the 17th of April (the month intended for his coronation) that Tasso heard from the Pope's own physician that there was no hope of his recovery. He thanked him with an embrace for such welcome news, and "gave humble thanks to God for guiding him into port after such long tempest." Thenceforward, we are told, no earthly thing seemed to interest him. He bequeathed a few tokens to his friends, his body to the convent church, his slender property and his writings to his patron the cardinal. A week later he received the last sacraments—exclaiming, as the prior entered his chamber with the viaticum, "expectans expectavi Dominum." The Pope, "sighing and groaning over the loss of such a man," sent him his plenary indulgence; and he exclaimed, as he received it from the cardinal, that this was "the chariot in which he hoped to go crowned, not with laurel as a poet to the Capitol, but with glory as one of the blest to heaven." He then extracted a promise from his patron to collect all the copies of his works,—considered by him as imperfect and his revision of the "Jerusalem" unsatisfactory,—and commit them to the flames; and, thanking him, asked to be left alone with his crucifix, his confessor, and one or two pious monks. "They," says Manso, "chanted psalms

by turns, Torquato sometimes joining, and at others turning to devout discourse with his loving Redeemer. So he spent all the night and the morning of the following day, the 25th of April, dedicated to St Mark the Evangelist, when, feeling his spirit departing, closely embracing his crucifix, he began to proffer these words, *In manus tuas, Domine;* but, not being able completely to finish them, near mid-day he ended the brief but glorious course of his mortal life, to recommence, as we may hope, the other immortal one of eternal glory in the heavenly Jerusalem."

There was loud lamentation in Rome over the great poet's premature death on the very eve of his triumph. His corpse was carried, by order of his patron,—dressed in an antique toga, and with its pallid brow at last encircled by the wreath of laurel,—amid kindled tapers with magnificent funeral pomp, down from the Janiculum to St Peter's. Numbers accompanied the procession; multitudes came crowding to meet it, and look once again upon the face of the dead; painters stooped over it trying to engrave its features on their memory; all men felt and bewailed the general loss. Then the bier returned by the way along which it had come; and that self-same night the wanderer's feet rested, according to his desire, beneath the pavement of St Onofrio's Church.

Yet more solemn obsequies were designed for him by the cardinal, funeral orations and elegies prepared for the occasion, and a splendid monument was projected. But other cares distracting Cinthio, those plans were not carried out; and for years a simple inscription on the slab that covered it was the only mark of Tasso's grave. At length Cardinal Bevilacqua, a native of Ferrara,

placed the poet's bust, with a laudation in Latin, on the wall above it; while, in our own day, the adjoining chapel of St Jerome has been decorated, and a costly monument erected in it to his memory.

Tasso's personal appearance has been minutely described by Manso, who says that he was tall and well-proportioned, active, a good horseman, and a good fencer: so good, as his victory over his intended assassins showed, that it was a saying at Ferrara that,

> "With the sword and with the pen
> Torquato beats all other men."

His broad forehead was high, inclining to baldness; his thin hair lighter than that of most Italians; his large dark-blue eyes were set far apart, and had black arched eyebrows. His nose was aquiline; his mouth wide and rather thin-lipped; his chestnut-coloured beard was thick. Altogether, his face attracted the eyes of strangers by its manly beauty, while its majestic look gained their reverence. His voice was clear and sonorous; but he had a slight impediment in his speech, and a trick of repeating the last words in a sentence.

It is on the endowments of his hero's mind, however, that Manso expatiates most fondly. Beginning with the singular gravity and docility which marked his infancy as that of a philosopher, the premature wisdom of his earliest words, and his unremitting application to study from the tender age of three years onwards—he goes on to praise his use of the abundant stores of knowledge so acquired; the variety and depth of learning manifested in his dialogues, whether on economics, politics, or ethics, and his skill in logic; to which he might well have added a longer

eulogium on the force of his rhetoric, which is remarkable,—Tasso, like our own Milton, having been not only the greatest poet, but the best and most eloquent prose writer of his day.

His poetic fame rests on even a wider base, and mounts to a yet loftier elevation. Manso claims for it the distinction of excellence in the three separate departments of epic, lyric, and dramatic verse; and the impartial judge, no doubt with some abatements, must allow the claim. Tasso's pastoral, indeed, rather owes its beauty to good narrative blank verse, and to sweet lyrics, than to any exhibition of dramatic power, of which his tragedy displays still less. When Manso says that in his madrigals he surpasses Martial, and in his odes Pindar, he is comparing things wholly unlike; and a sober estimate of Tasso's sonnets and odes must place them lower than Petrarch's, and, though finding much in them to praise, still regret the conceits by which they are often deformed. Of the great epic which has spread Tasso's renown throughout the civilised world we must speak in the next chapter; suffice it here to say, that when Manso lauds it for its strict adherence to the rules of the ancient critics, for its unity of design with its well-ordered unfolding, and for its dignity alike of thought and of sonorous verse, he only names some of its merits.

Judging from Manso's description, we may believe Tasso to have been a delightful companion when he met with a congenial spirit. In general society he was often silent and abstracted; and those who roused him from his reverie were sometimes more startled than pleased by the pungent wit at his command. A Greek once re-

proved him for speaking ill of his country in the "Jerusalem Delivered," and said that his censure was unjust, since all the virtues came from Greece. "Indeed they did," was the reply, "not leaving one behind them." But, more generally, his brief utterances took the form of moral apothegms; as when hearing an avaricious nobleman, who had been listening to praise of Cardinal Montalto's liberality, say that Montalto could afford to be liberal, since he only held his property for his life, Tasso rejoined: "And you, my lord, for how many lives do you possess yours?"

There is political wisdom in Tasso's advice to his young friends, the Cardinals Aldobrandini, when they talked of throwing Pasquin's statue into the Tiber, in order to put an end to the obnoxious pasquinades constantly fastened to it by night: "No, for heaven's sake, lest from his dust the river breed frogs innumerable, to croak both night and day." It is never wise to close a safety-valve. And he is said to have told their uncle the Pope, that if he wished statues to say no evil, he must make the men to whom he intrusted office govern well.

Some of Manso's anecdotes show us the poet talking about his own works to his friends. On Tasso expressing himself much pleased with Guarini's "Pastor Fido," which had been read aloud in his presence, Manso slyly suggested that very likely what gave him pleasure was the part of the poem which he recognised as his own. "Not so," was the reply; "it is never pleasing to see one's goods in the hands of another." Once some gentlemen discussed in Tasso's presence the comparative excellence of various highly admired stanzas

in his "Jerusalem,"—Salvator Pasqualoni giving at last, with Tasso's assent, the palm to that which, commencing with the words "Giunto alla tomba," depicts Tancred at Clorinda's grave. A silly bystander, who had felt unable to enter into the question, desirous to say something, thereupon asked the poet which he thought the finest line in Petrarch; and perhaps did not know why the company smiled when Tasso gravely answered, "This one, in my present judgment—

"'Infinita è la schiera degli sciocchi.'"[1]

Other stories exhibit Tasso taking revenge on his enemies, the doctors. Once he refused a quack medicine, saying, that of many remedies which he had taken, many had harmed, none profited him. "Why do you speak amiss of mine, not having tried it?" said the man. "If I *had* tried it," replied Torquato, "I doubt I should not be here to speak amiss of it." Some one asked him once why it was the custom at Macerata, when men took there the degree of doctors of medicine, to put on them the two gold spurs of knighthood. He answered, "That with the one they may make war on the diseases, with the other on the life, of the diseased." Having, however, on one occasion exercised the art himself, and suggested a method of cure to a young doctor, which proved successful with Manso's aged relative, the Marquis of Sant' Agata, some blamed the youthful physician, who had ventured on a new remedy with a person of such quality without consulting his seniors. Tasso exclaimed in his defence, "If science resided in the beard, we might employ he-goats to doctor us."

[1] "Of fools the mighty host is infinite."

More than one of Manso's anecdotes illustrate his hero's personal courage. When riding towards Rome, some of the advanced guard of his little party galloped back, crying out to him that the bandits were near. "Fear nothing," said Torquato, in the words of Leonidas, "we also are near them." A storm was agitating the usually calm waters of the Bay of Naples, when Manso's brother-in-law, surveying it with Tasso from an arcade in the most elevated portion of the Marquis's garden, exclaimed, "How bold men are who risk their lives where so many perish daily!" "You may say the same thing of our beds," replied Tasso; "death can reach us anywhere."

Two other speeches recorded by Manso are worth remembering,—the first as a sign of the poet's modesty, the second of his dignity. Cardinal Mondovi expressed his surprise to him that a man whose poem had made him glorious throughout the world, had only felt the sharp tooth of envy in one court (Ferrara), and from one academy (Florence). "Lightning seldom strikes low houses," answered Tasso. "Rather," rejoined the courtly prelate, "the brighter and swifter the flame, the less the smoke; and so a sudden glory like yours gives small space for envy." But when, visiting a churchman of different manners to congratulate him on his elevation to an archbishopric, Torquato found himself coldly and haughtily received, he speedily took his leave, with the words: "Monsignor, I rejoice at the dignity which you have obtained, but I condole with myself for having lost a friend."

Manso's last anecdotes are pathetic. He tells us that when Tasso took his final departure from his house, he bade his kind mother farewell with the words, that he

ought not to thank her for all her honours and caresses, since their chief effect now was to make death seem more to be regretted. When he saw Cardinal Cinthio and his friends leave his death-chamber in tears, on the other hand Torquato said to them cheerfully, "You think you are leaving me behind, but I shall go before you." "Why keep you your eyes closed, Signor Torquato?" asked an indiscreet watcher by his bed. "To use them to stay shut," replied the dying man. Not long before, he had expressed it as his deliberate judgment, that "if there were no death, nothing in the world would be more unhappy than man; since men being appointed different stations, and no man being contented with his own (as are the brutes deprived of intellect, or the angels who are pure intelligence), it would necessarily follow that they must live in continual war and infelicity, from which death alone can deliver them, besides opening to them the road to eternal blessedness."

Three of Manso's anecdotes bear on the question of Tasso's supposed madness. He had been discoursing long and learnedly, when he overheard some of the company whisper, "How could such a man have ever been taken for a lunatic?" "No marvel, gentlemen," answered he, with a smile, "for in Seneca's judgment a man should either be born into this world a king or a madman; and I, having no opportunity of proving myself in the first state, wished at least to try if I could succeed in the second." Equally good-humoured was his rejoinder to a young Milanese cavalier, decked with many gold chains, who did not whisper low enough his question, "Is this that great man who was said to be out of his mind?" and received the reply, "Yes; but I never

required even one chain." And alike good-tempered and sensible was the poet's defence of one of his long fits of silence, which one of the company thought a sign of derangement—"No fool ever knew how to hold his tongue."

No answers could be more clear-headed than these three; no better proofs of a vigorous intellect working sanely could be given than the compositions, both in prose and verse, which, from early youth till death, flowed from Tasso's pen. Was then his madness a pure fiction, invented by his enemies, and given colour to at times by his own policy in order to disarm their malice? Learned Italian physicians of our own day have felt an interest in investigating this question; and their conclusion seems to be that, at least in the middle part of his life, Tasso was afflicted by a species of monomania, which had many perfectly lucid intervals, which at no time interfered with the workings of his intellect in the higher spheres of thought, but which occasioned the suspicions, the restlessness, and the hallucinations under which we have marked his sufferings; which was aggravated by his cruel and unjust detention at Santa Anna, but from which he was probably never afterwards entirely, and for long, free. This may indeed have been the case; yet a few hypochondriacal fancies and optical delusions, fits of deep dejection and occasionally of frenzied rage, seem only natural results, in an excitable temperament and a morbidly sensitive disposition, of Tasso's sudden and terrible reverse of fortune, of his mostly solitary imprisonment, and of the horror of being surrounded by, and treated as, the mad. The mind which was not wholly overset by such causes may well seem to have been one of exceptional soundness.

Phrase it as we like, however, there can be no doubt that Tasso's brilliant and unique talents were hindered from bringing happiness to their possessor by a most irritable nervous organisation, and by the want of calm judgment. His evidently constitutional predisposition to melancholy was aggravated by his beautiful mother's early death, by his father's exile and misfortunes,—in all probability also by his own love placed too high to be happy, and by his consequent exclusion from those domestic joys at which we at times find him casting a regretful glance; by his experience of human malignity, by his religious doubts, and by the cruel treatment which he met with. And who can wonder that, after his resurrection from the ghastly sepulchre which entombed his manhood at its perfection, and his fame at its height, he shunned the crowds who misjudged him, loved little the life which had disappointed him, and turned more steadfastly than in youth to the only hope which does not shrink in size before sickness and advancing death!

It remains to say a word on Tasso's moral character, which appeared in his later years to the young Manso one of almost ideal perfection. The perfect purity of his life, from the day when he entered his prison to its end, was, in Italy and in those days, an amazement to his contemporaries; as was his resolute discouragement of all unseemly conversation or writings. That his life at Ferrara, amid all the temptations of that Court, would show white, if placed beside that of his patrons and his rivals, there is no reasonable doubt. That it was wholly blameless it seems too much to affirm; especially when we consider the sonnet, erroneously supposed by Rosini

to have convinced Alphonso of Tasso's guilty passion for Leonora;[1] but which must have been intended for another lady, possibly Ginevra Marzo. All we can say is, that probably no Italian gentleman of the sixteenth century had so few youthful transgressions to look back on as Tasso; or repented of them more sincerely.

Again, in an age of prevalent deceit and dissimulation, Tasso was in the main truthful and outspoken. Manso attributes his frequent silence in mixed companies to his fear of false and uncharitable words; and we have seen how little he was a match for the craft and plotting of Ferrara. On the other side must be set his special pleading in his own defence, his adulation of princes in prose and verse, and his too frequent readiness

> "To heap the shrine of luxury and pride
> With incense kindled at the Muses' flames,"

—which, whatever ill-custom and the dependence of literature on the favour of the great may plead in its excuse, rigid morality must condemn.

Above all, Tasso seems to have been singularly free from jealousy and envy. His pride, somewhat overweening at one part of his life, may have helped him to this by allowing him to fear no rival; while it doubtless wounded susceptibilities, and raised him enemies. But to those enemies he was, as we have seen, remarkably kind and forgiving. He not only died, but lived, in charity with those who had used him so cruelly; and, in earlier life, when urged to prevent their malice by the usual Italian expedient of assassination, answered, "Heaven

[1] It is not intended to deny that Tasso's enemies may have persuaded Alphonso of this falsely, only it cannot be believed that Torquato ever so insulted his pure-minded Princess.

forbid! I would rather bring those of them who are dead to life, than slay those who live." When advised to use his favour with Alphonso to their injury, he is said to have replied, "I should like to take away my enemies' ill-will, not their dignities or honours."

Manso claims for his hero the praise of a temperance amounting to absolute indifference to the pleasures of the table, though allowing that he loved good wine; of some excess in which, at one time, Tasso's letters certainly give ground of suspicion. They also abate something of his friend's encomium on his disregard of money. It might have been well had a more prudent care of it spared the poet the shame (according to our ideas) of his frequent applications for gifts to friends and patrons.

But on a fair survey of Tasso's slight faults and great virtues, the impartial reader begins to share Manso's reverence for a man who was so much sinned against and who sinned so little himself; and is prepared to receive the testimony of his confessor, who assured his friend that, during many of his last years, his illustrious penitent had never had to accuse himself of a mortal sin.

For with the bright lights and black shadows of Tasso's earlier career, there vanished likewise the doubts which had disturbed his faith; and its star rose clear and friendly in the grey twilight which succeeded them, and guided the wanderer home. The beliefs which Tasso had always professed, defended, and celebrated in immortal verse, became the true possession of his inmost heart, and brought to perfection all his good qualities. We have seen him adoring the mystery of the Incarnation at Loretto and at Rome; let us see him later still

at the foot of the cross in Florence on Good Friday. "No longer love for a fair maiden, or feeling for the beauty of nature, not the pain born of vanished hopes, but the faith which transports man amid the ineffable joys of Paradise, is there the inspiration of his muse."[1]

"Soul sick and sorrowful,

. . . . . .

Behold the trophy which adorns
With drops of blood thy King!
Behold him languishing
On His high cross, wearing His crown of thorns.

. . . . . .

Ah! how they wound him hear,
He who as dove and spotless lamb was pure.
Cause of His cross and of His sepulture,
To His affliction and His groans give ear."

It was in the contemplation of those divine sorrows that Tasso found relief from his own. Christ's prayer for His enemies, descending into his heart, made it seem to him only natural to forgive those who had wronged him. The once-coveted laurel wreath ceased to attract him as he gazed on the more awful crown on the head of the august Victim. And we have seen how joyfully he obeyed the summons which called him, as his pious friend fully believed, to join the ranks of the victorious soldiers of the cross, in a better Jerusalem than that of which he had sung from youth to age.

[1] Cecchi.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE "JERUSALEM DELIVERED."

Tasso's great epic was carefully constructed in accordance with the rules laid down by critics for such compositions, and modelled by its author in generous emulation of the masterpieces of antiquity. We have seen how much toil and labour he expended upon it; how much more counsel from without he sought and accepted, than a Dante or a Milton would have put up with; and how soon he became dissatisfied with his own work. The peaceful serenity of genius of the highest class was wanting to this largely gifted man; and he worked not calmly self-reliant, guided by the unerring instinct which is the prerogative of such genius, but with much anxious inquiry after precedent, and much sensitiveness to contemporary opinion.

His own ambition was to follow Homer and Virgil closely, and so produce a Christian "Iliad" which might rival the Greek one. His great predecessor, Ariosto, had, as he thought, erred by the irregularity and wild disordered beauty of his version of the old romances; and so Tasso cast his own poem with scrupulous care into a classic shape. Just as his eye, trained to admire antique art

in architecture and statues, could not discern aright the wonders of medieval skill which met it in the Gothic churches of France, so Tasso's mind, fascinated by the beauty of form in classic poetry, proved unable to make a perfectly free use of the noble inspirations of the faith and chivalry of his forefathers. The "Jerusalem Delivered" is therefore a poem with a double origin: a stream which flows from two sources,—one far away on the hills of Greece; the other that nearer fount in the forest-glades of Brittany which springs up murmuring of Avalon's island-vale. The framework of the poem is Greek; its subject, episodes, and pervading spirit breathe of Christian romance; and to them it owes its ever-enduring charm.

It is easy to point out how, regarded merely as an imitator of Homer, Tasso stands (despite Voltaire's judgment to the contrary) as imitators must do, on a lower level than his great master; how his Godfrey, if wiser and more dignified than Agamemnon, is far from being as life-like a form as the leader of the assembled Greeks; how his Raymond of Toulouse presents to us no such delightful portraiture of the garrulous wisdom of old age as does Homer's Nestor; and how Rinaldo's youthful petulance pales before the divine wrath of Achilles. Again, in some speeches and in many of Tasso's battle-scenes we seem to be reading a translation of well-known passages in Homer, and not in Homer only, but in Virgil or Lucan; and while we admire the beauty of the rendering and the skilfulness of the adaptation, we feel that only persons unacquainted with classic lore can bestow on such passages the praise due to original invention. Where, too, the thing imitated possesses unique

beauty, as, for instance, Virgil's portraiture of the deserted and despairing Dido, each reader must think Tasso scarcely wise to provoke the comparison; and feel, as when he sets beside the dying Tyrian queen his forsaken Armida, who, unlike her, can survive both her grief and disappointed revenge, that the old wine is better than the new.

But it is otherwise when Tasso surrenders himself to the inspirations which befit the poet of the Cross—the fruit of the great religious revival of the sixteenth century —and suffers them to predominate over the stately but cold regularity which he had imbibed from the classic revival of the fifteenth. It is then that he rises to the height of his noble subject; and makes us feel the ideal grandeur of that enterprise in which the chiefs of Europe, laying aside thoughts of personal revenge or profit, united, not, like Homer's heroes, to chastise a lawless ravisher and recover a stolen beauty, but to clear the way for Christian feet to the sepulchre of their Lord. A juster and holier Ruler than Zeus protects and guides His champions; no Iris or Hermes, but angels of light, bear His behests below; they are opposed by no wrathful Ares or Here, but by the princes of darkness; men, and even women, contend nobly for the crown of martyrdom: in a word, we have left the Greek temple, with its limited beauty, for the cathedral, with its lofty arches and its upsoaring vault, suggestive of the infinite.

Even more magical is the effect on Tasso's epic of other great and kindred ideas which have helped to mould modern life. The individual not absorbed by the state, according to the notions of antiquity, but standing forth in his own personal dignity; woman

reverenced, as our Teutonic forefathers, combined with the Gospel, have taught Christendom to do, and exalted to a fantastic eminence by chivalry; the ideal of knightly valour and honour: such are some of the mines which supply Tasso's finest gold,—a metal which will be found true even if, with Boileau, we consider other portions of his decorations to be as tinsel compared with Virgil's ore. Not merely here the skilful transferrer of antique legend to the period of the middle ages, but the originator of new forms of beauty, Tasso delights us by singing, like a true medieval romancer, of enchanted forest, of brave champion and fair damsel: under his heroes' corselets hearts throb with refinements of passion unknown to an Achilles or a Diomed; his enchantress is no soulless Circe, but can love and be loved again; her island-paradise makes Calypso's cavern-bower shrink into insignificance; and Virgil's sweet bud of maidenhood, Camilla, expands to the beholder's delight, under Tasso's hand, into the peerless flower, Clorinda.

Such being the varied sources of the idea of the "Jerusalem Delivered," we find that its author spared no pains in order to embody it exactly. He searched the chronicles of the crusades with all diligence for the outlines of the story that he was to embellish; he collected such exact topographical information that the errors in his descriptions of the scenes of his great conflicts are few and unimportant; his own skill as a swordsman and his intimacy with military men enabled him to depict his battles and single combats vividly,—correctly also, allowing for intentional exaggerations.

With yet more anxious care, we find Tasso polishing the octaves in which, after Boïardo and Ariosto's ex-

ample, he composed his poem; and striving by striking antithesis and happy turns of expression to charm his readers' minds, while he courted their ear by studied alliteration, by harmonious verse, and by discords introduced occasionally, lest his sweetness might prove cloying. The labour is at times too obvious, the composition too artificial, the studied antithesis too cold for genuine passion: and as the criticism which passes for Galileo's affirms, here and there Tasso's carefully turned lines join like the cold bright fragments of a mosaic, instead of blending like the rich colours of a great artist. Conceits, as they were called, were the besetting sin of his age, and Tasso did not always rise above them. But he was right in his determination to express everything in the best way within his power; and his having done so is one great cause of his work's immortality. How great was the labour so employed we may conjecture from the letter in which Tasso says that he had wearied himself for a whole evening, and made a hundred changes in the two lines which describe how Tancred rallied his failing powers to baptise the dying Clorinda, without being able to satisfy himself. They owe their present beautiful form to the advice of his correspondent, Scipio Gonzaga:

"Non morì già; chè sue virtuti accolse
Tutte in quel punto, e in guardia al cor le mise."

Sometimes the right shape was revealed to him by a sudden accident, as when, having long toiled vainly to paint Herminia dismounting in haste to aid the bleeding Tancred, he saw a young man thrown from his horse in one of the streets in Rome, and straightway produced the admired line—

"Non scese, no, precipitò di sella."

And, after all, the poem was given to the world in what its author considered an unfinished state, and he would gladly have bestowed yet more time in perfecting and polishing it. The fate which snatched it from his hand, however, served him well, as did the instinct by which his countrymen rejected his after alterations. The "Jerusalem Delivered" stands, and will stand, an imperishable monument; resting indeed on antique marble columns brought from older edifices, but adorned by the fair devices, the exquisitely blended colours, of fresh and original inspiration.

It is not a poem of the first order. It does not rank with the "Iliad" or the "Divine Comedy," or even with the "Eneïd" or the "Paradise Lost." But it is one of the greatest poems of the second order that the world has ever seen; and therefore it is popular in a way in which only the first-named of those greater works ever could be. For its merits are exactly of the kind to strike all readers, to give pleasure alike to those who can, and to those who cannot, fully appreciate the excellences of the works of mightier genius. It calls its hearers to sound no difficult abysses of thought; it demands no painful study for its comprehension; its beauties are not of the delicate and refined species which escape the ordinary eye. Easily taken in at the first glance, its charms appeal successfully to all classes of readers. Accordingly, it has been translated into every civilised, or partly civilised, tongue—not only of Europe, but even the Turkish, the Arabic, and the Chinese. In its own land it is a national possession to a degree which no English poem is in England: for in Italy "you meet Tasso's creations alike in the shepherd's hut and the rich man's palace;

and his pathetic and passionate song consoles the poor mariner who rows smitten by the hot sun, and the countryman who plies his flail amid the chills of winter."[1] It is at once the delight of prince and peasant, of cardinal and gondolier.

Cowley says that a poet has a right to be tried by his peers. The peers of Tasso are hard to find; and if we succeed in assembling our jury, we may still distrust their verdict, since "great poets are" often "bad critics." Yet the opinion of our own great Spenser and greater Milton must carry weight with us. Imitation is the sincerest flattery, and both have imitated Tasso. Spenser has gone beyond mere imitation, and, as we shall presently see, actually translated stanzas of the "Jerusalem Delivered," and incorporated them, without acknowledgment, in his "Faëry Queen;" while it is hard to say how much the first conception of that fascinating poem owes to Tasso's own allegoric interpretation of his epic: an after-thought, in his case, worked out partly as an exercise of ingenuity and partly to disarm objectors,—although the "Enchanted Forest" and the tale of "Rinaldo and Armida" lend themselves as readily to such interpretation as do many parts of the "Odyssey."

If, leaving the judgment of Tasso's contemporaries, we descend to later times, it is impossible to avoid noticing Voltaire's opinion. Absurd as is his preference of the "Jerusalem Delivered" to the "Iliad," he was a good judge of style, and not ill qualified to discern the peculiar merits of Tasso's work. According to him, the poet has treated his sublime subject

[1] Cecchi.

with all the dignity which it deserves, — a questionable statement. Less doubtful is his praise of Tasso's interesting method and masterly distribution of light and shade; while of his style he says that it is "in all parts equally clear and elegant, and that, when his subject requires elevation, it is astonishing how Tasso impresses a new character upon the softness of the Italian language,—how he sublimes it into majesty and compresses it into strength."[1]

To quote a later witness, and a distinguished countryman of Tasso's own, the poet Metastasio tells us of "the strange emotion which the first reading of the 'Jerusalem Delivered' produced in me. The spectacle which it presents of a great and single action lucidly proposed, masterly conducted, and perfectly completed; the variety of events that caused and enriched it without disturbing its unity; the magic of a style always clear, always sublime, always sonorous, able to clothe the meanest objects with its own nobility; the life-like colouring of his comparisons and descriptions; the seductive evidence with which he relates and persuades; the truth and uniformity of the characters; the learning, the judgment shown; and, above all, that prodigious force of genius which, instead of exhausting itself as the poem proceeds, acquires fresh strength, have filled me with delight, respect, and admiration."

Lastly, the great German who made Tasso's personal

[1] Persons who have read Dante more, and understood him better, than Voltaire, will scarcely be "astonished" at Tasso's achievements in this line. If they wonder at all, it will be that Tasso's early study and diligent annotation of the "Divina Commedia" did not prove to him a better protection against the false taste of his own day.

troubles at Ferrara the theme of a justly celebrated play,—which, though pervaded by the calm atmosphere of the Court of Weimar rather than by that sultry and electric one which it was the Italian poet's lot to breathe, may still be consulted with advantage by the student of his life,—has thus expressed his own estimate (as we cannot doubt) of his hero:—

"I honour every man and each man's merit;
To Tasso I am only just. His eye
Scarce rests upon this earth; his ear perceives
The harmony of nature; while his breast
Accepts, at once and gladly, every gift
Of history's records, or that life bestows:
Things widely scattered can his mind collect,
His heart on lifeless things true life bestow.
What we thought common he ennobles oft,
While what we prized before him turns to nought.
In such peculiar magic circle wanders
The marvellous man, and makes us wander with him.
. . . . . .
With genius manifold he glorifies
One single image in his every rhyme.
Now raises it in glory and in light
Up to the starry heavens, adoring bows
Like angels in the clouds before that form;
And then anon tracks it through peaceful fields,
Weaving each flower into a wreath for it.
Should his adored depart, he consecrates
That path her beauteous foot so gently trod:
Then hid amid the leaves, like nightingale,
He from a love-sick bosom fills with plaint,
Poured forth in melody, the grove and air."

—"Torquato Tasso," Goethe.

The "Jerusalem Delivered" is its author's memorial to future ages. His odes and sonnets, and his other

poems, find tens of readers, while it finds thousands. His "Aminta," ever charming as it is, belongs to a style of poetry no longer in general favour, and has been eclipsed by Guarini's "Pastor Fido" as the typical pastoral poem. But Tasso's brave Saracens and chivalric Christians,—his Argantes—heroic supporter of a falling cause—his valiant and sorrowful Tancred, his audacious Rinaldo and holy Godfrey, his perilously delightful Armida, his innocent Herminia, his brave Clorinda, and his saintly Sophronia,—are beautiful and immortal creations which all hearts welcome, all lands gladly naturalise.

It was their poet's fate to see nearly all his earthly wishes disappointed: his father's bones remained without their monument; his mother's dowry was withheld from him till it was too late to be of use; his Prince's favour forsook, his high-placed love failed, him; his restless brain and excitable nerves destroyed one building that he tried to raise for his shelter after another; the well-earned laurel-crown only came in time to deck his bier. One wish of his youth, and one only, found fulfilment,—it was that which he expressed when he said, "I hope by labour and intense study, joined with the strong propensity of nature, to leave something to after-times so written that they should not willingly let it die." And the abundant fulfilment of that wish Tasso owes to his "Jerusalem Delivered."

CHAPTER IX.

THE ADVANCE ON JERUSALEM—SOPHRONIA AND OLINDO.

Tasso's epic begins, like the "Iliad," near the end of the enterprise which is its theme. The preaching of Peter the Hermit in Europe, the Council of Clermont, the assembling of the Crusaders and their first successes in Asia, are supposed to be known to the listeners;[1] as the Greek bard reckoned on a knowledge by his of the fleet gathered at Aulis, and the cities taken during the nine years spent on the windy plains round Troy. Nearly six years[2] have elapsed since the Christian host set out. Cilicia has been overrun; the cross waves on the walls of Nicæa and of Antioch; but as yet Jerusalem has been unassailed, and the divided command of the crusading army threatens to frustrate its principal object. It is at this critical moment that Tasso begins his tale:—

[1] It was not without much deliberation that Tasso resolved on wholly omitting them. He once proposed to assemble the Crusaders for Council in a church decorated with pictures, made by Godfrey's order, of all these things. He also thought of a narration of the capture of Nicæa or of Antioch, and of placing it in the mouth of Herminia, a principal sufferer,—as Virgil makes Eneas describe the fall of Troy to Dido. But his Roman advisers counselled otherwise.

[2] So says Tasso: the real time was three.

1.

" The sacred armies and the godly knight
That the great sepulchre of Christ did free
I sing ; much wrought his valour and foresight,
And in that glorious war much suffered he :
In vain 'gainst him did hell oppose her might,
In vain the Turks and Morians armèd be ;
His soldiers wild, to brawls and mutines prest,
Reducèd he to peace ; so heaven him blest.

2.

O heavenly Muse, that not with fading bays
Deckest thy brow by th' Heliconian spring,
But sittest, crowned with stars' immortal rays,
In heaven, where legions of bright angels sing,
Inspire life in my wit, my thoughts upraise,
My verse ennoble, and forgive the thing,
If fictions light I mix with truth divine,
And fill these lines with others' praise than thine."—(F.)

The first-fruit of this invocation is the account of the angel Gabriel's descent to earth, bearing the divine command that Godfrey of Bouillon should be elected sole head of the crusading armies. This is done, and they then pass in review before him, and before the reader, who is thus introduced to their leaders,—to the martial prelates William and Adhemar; to Robert of Normandy and Gernando of Norway; to the wise Raymond, Count of Toulouse, and to Godfrey's brothers, Baldwin and Eustace; to the brave lady Gildippe, whose poet exclaims—

" Where love keeps school, what thing cannot be learned?"

as he reports how, rather than let her adored husband go to the wars without her, she learned to be a formidable warrior herself; to Rinaldo of Este, the young Achilles of the poem, invented and placed by Tasso

among his historical[1] personages as a special compliment to Duke Alphonso; and to Tancred the Sicilian-Norman, most interesting of Tasso's heroes, already hopelessly in love with the beautiful paynim Amazon Clorinda,—since his chance-meeting with whom, unhelmed by a fountain, his mind has known no peace,—and whose sadness has engraven on his face these words: "He burns, and his love is hopeless."

The enumeration of the crusading host and fleet completed, we are admitted into the goal of their labours, Jerusalem; where we find the aged king Aladdin busy preparing his defence. He has levied troops from his own subjects, and hired numerous mercenaries; he has laid waste the country outside his walls and poisoned the wells; and he has raised strong bulwarks on the one side of the city which is not already rendered impregnable by its natural defences. But over and above all this, he has likewise recourse to enchantments; and the powerful sorcerer Ismeno assures him that he can provide him with a perfectly effectual palladium. From one of the Christian churches in Jerusalem an image of the Virgin is torn by force, spells are muttered over it, and Ismeno promises that so long as it stands in the great mosque on Mount Moriah, the crusaders will toil in vain to take the city. But this outrage is too much for the patient endurance of the Christians of the town, few and feeble as they are. Some pious hand risks death to remove the statue, and by next morning it has disappeared from the mosque.

All search for it or for its stealer proves vain: the

[1] See Tasso's 57th Letter (Guasti) for the slender historical foundation.

king grows furious, and prepares to put all his Christian subjects to the sword. Then it is that one heroic maiden resolves to devote herself to die for her people. "There was," says Tasso, in lines the biographic significance of which we have already seen, "among them a virgin of ripened years, and high and regal thoughts; hers, too, was lofty beauty, but for that she cared not, except in so far as it might serve for an ornament to her goodness; so she hid it in a narrow cell from the gaze of admirers. Yet in spite of her care it was espied by the young Olindo, who dared not, however, reveal to Sophronia (such was her name) the passion with which it inspired him, but—

'Wished much, hoped little, and for nothing asked,'

content to serve on, a wretched lover—

'Unseen, ill-noted, or yet worse, disdained.'"

At the news of her nation's peril, Sophronia leaves her seclusion to draw down on her single head the wrath which else would destroy so many. She takes her veil and mantle, and passes through the crowded streets to the palace.

19.

"Admired of all on went this noble maid
Until the presence of the king she gained,
Nor for he swelled with ire was she afraid,
But his fierce wrath with fearless grace sustained.
'I come,' quoth she, '(but be thine anger staid,
And causeless wrath 'gainst faultless souls restrained)—
I come to show thee and to bring thee both
The wight whose deed hath made thy heart so wroth.'

20.

Her modest boldness, and that lightning ray
Which her sweet beauty streamèd on his face

Had struck the prince with wonder and dismay,
Changèd his cheer and cleared his moody grace;
That had her eyes disposed their looks to play,
The king had snarèd been in love's strong lace;
But wayward beauty doth not fancy move,—
A frown forbids, a smile engendereth love.

21.

It was amazement, wonder, and delight,
(Although not love) that moved his cruel sense:
'Tell on,' quoth he, 'unfold the chance aright;
Thy people's lives I grant for recompense.'
Then she, 'Behold the faulter here in sight,—
This hand committed that supposed offence;—(F.)
I took the image; what you search for see;
And mine of right the punishment must be.'—(F.)

22.

Her lofty head she offered thus to bear
The common doom, and willed it hers alone.
O noble lie! is ever truth so fair,
That we should choose it in thy stead our own?
The tyrant for a while sat thoughtful there,
Nor, as he used, his rage made quickly known;
Then said, 'That thou discover soon I will
What aid, what counsel hadst thou in that ill.'

23.

'With any one my glory to divide,
In least degree was far from my desire,'
She said; 'no helper walked my steps beside;
With mine own self I did alone conspire.'
'On thee alone,' the tyrant then replied,
'Shall all the heavier fall my vengeful ire.'
''Tis just and right,' quoth she, 'I yield consent;
Mine all the praise, so all the punishment.'" [1]

[1] Seven lines in these two stanzas are from Fairfax's version; the rest of which varies here too much from the sense of the original to represent it adequately.

"Where have you hid the image?" asks Aladdin. "I burned it," is Sophronia's answer. "The thief you behold; the thing stolen you will never see!" Then the king's anger can be no longer restrained. Love vainly interposes her beauty as a shield.

"To gain a pardon for her hope no more
Pure heart, high mind, and noble-featured face."

The maiden is condemned to be burned. Silently she stands while her veil is torn away and her arms bound. Her brave heart, if shaken, is not terrified; the blood leaves her cheek, but no unseemly pallor overspreads it.

Meantime the report of what is happening goes through the city. Olindo hears, fears that it may be his adored lady of whom it tells, and runs to see,—

"But, when that beauteous prisoner he in place,
Not of accused, but of condemned, beheld,
When on their cruel task the soldiers bent
He saw, with headlong speed he forward went

28.

To the king, crying, 'Nay, not guilty she
Is of this theft; her boast is madness plain.
A lone, unpractised maid could never be
So wise, so bold, so strong, such prize to gain.
How from its cheated guards she artfully
The holy image stole let her explain,
If hers the deed. I that I took it tell.'
(Alas! that unloved lover loved thus well.)"

Olindo adds such circumstances as he can invent on the spur of the moment to make his tale seem credible, and ends by saying—

"'The honour and the death of right are mine;
Let not this maid usurp my punishment.

Mine are these chains, and 'tis for me this fire
Is kindled, and heaped up this funeral pyre.' "

Sophronia rejects his claim : she needs no companion on that awful path which she is preparing with undiminished fortitude to tread. Olindo insists, and bears himself as magnanimously as she does in the unexampled contest.

" O sight for men and angels' gaze ! where met
Are love and high-souled virtue in fair strife ;
Where death for prize is to the victor set,—
For penalty unto the vanquished—life."

But the furious king grimly throws down his truncheon to close the lists, by adjudging the prize of death to each of the combatants. Bound back to back to the same stake, Olindo feels emboldened to speak to the lady for whose dear sake he is about to die, and let his long-suppressed love find its way at last to her ear. " Is this the bond, are these the fires," cries his wailing voice, " which I once hoped might kindle both our hearts, and bind us together for life? Love promised one thing, cruel fate gives another : what it separated too long in life, it unites with harsh hand in death. Yet I rejoice to be thy consort even on this bed of fire : thy death grieves me, not my own, since I die beside thee." Sophronia's answer comes back to him like a voice from a higher sphere :—

36.

" ' Far other thoughts, far other plaints, my friend,
This time demands from us, for cause more high
Why not upon thy sins thy spirit bend,
And on God's guerdon great think thankfully ?
In His Name suffer, and all pain shall end

In sweetness ; gladly seek Him in the sky.
Behold the heavens how fair ; the sun, behold,
Inviting us to be on high consoled.'

37.

Then loud the pagan throng bursts forth in tears ;
The Christians weep, but with a voice more low.
A soft, unwonted thrill to shake appears
The king's harsh breast, at sight of so much woe.
He feels it and is wroth, to bend he fears ;
Aside his looks, his footsteps backward go.
Thou only, thou Sophronia, calm dost keep
Amid such grief, nor, wept by all, dost weep."

But the terrible sacrifice, after all, remains unconsummated. The silver tigress is seen gleaming on an advancing helmet, which betokens the approach of Clorinda,—the martial maid whom Tancred at first sight loved,—come to offer her redoubtable arm for the defence of Jerusalem. She, like her prototype Camilla, despised from childhood, says Tasso, the needle and the distaff, to follow the chase and slay the fierce beasts of the forest. Grown to womanhood, she, like her, makes war on men ; and such is her valour that, so long as she lives, the city will remain untaken. This is the powerful intercessor who, catching sight of the martyr pair at the stake, spurs her horse forward.

42.

"The crowds give way : she stops, surveying near
The two thus bound together, marks how one
Deep silence keeps, the other's groans men hear,
And by the weaker sex most strength is shown.
Him she sees weep like man of dolorous cheer
Through pity for an anguish not his own,
And her keep mute, with eyes so fixed on heaven,
That not one lingering thought to earth seems given."

Even less moved by Olindo's plaints than by Sophronia's silence, Clorinda asks their crime, discerns their innocence, stays their execution by her own authority, and goes on to plead for them with the king. To him she urges that the presence of an image being contamination to a mosque, its removal was more likely to be a miracle worked by Mahomet himself, than the act of any mortal hand. The argument is a good one ; but a worse would have convinced Aladdin after these words : "I am Clorinda, whose name you may have sometimes heard, come to defend your realm and our common faith. Employ me where you like,—in the field, within your walls : I neither dread the loftiest nor disdain the humblest enterprise." "Where has your fame not penetrated ?" replies the king. "I feel securer aided by you than by the accession of a large army, and begin to long for Godfrey's arrival. Be general over all my warriors. As to your request, I can refuse nothing to such an advocate. If those for whom you speak are innocent, I acquit them ; if guilty, I give them to you."

53.

"Thus were the twain unbound. Olindo's fate
Was of a surety very highly blest,
Which let him deed perform that love, though late,
Through love awakened in a noble breast ;
And, loved for lover scorned, yea, wedded mate
For doomed, from stake to nuptials blithe addressed.
With her he willed to die ; and in return
She for life chooses who with her would burn."

Meantime the Crusaders are advancing towards Jerusalem. They are already at Emmaus, when the ambassadors of the King of Egypt, sent to make God-

frey advantageous offers in other directions, if only he will refrain from attacking the city, come up with them. One of these, Alethes, the smooth-tongued and crafty counsellor, was a sketch from life at Ferrara, and might be easily paralleled elsewhere among the Italian statesmen. His speech is artful and persuasive in the extreme. His comrade, Argantes, is a nobler form—the Hector[1] (so far as valour goes) of Tasso's "Iliad." Covetous of glory, hating the Christian name, his barbaric pride disdains to cajole and to entreat; and it is with stern satisfaction that he hears Godfrey thus answer Alethes' smooth arguments, offers of friendship, and hints at hidden perils :—

82.

"Know that till now we suffered have much pain,
By lands and seas where storms and tempests fall,
To make the passage easy, safe, and plain,
That leads us to this venerable wall;
That so we might reward from heaven obtain,
And free this town from being longer thrall;
Nor is it grievous to so good an end
Our honours, kingdoms, lives, and goods to spend."—(F.)

83.

"For 'twas not Avarice, or Ambition's call,
That spurred and guided us on this emprise.
(Nay, may our heavenly Father keep from all
Our hearts infection of so great a vice!
Nor let upon us that sweet poison fall
Which seeks to death through pleasure to entice.)
But His high Hand, who gently pierces through
The heart of stone, to soften and renew,

[1] Tasso greatly increased the resemblance in his "Gerusalemme Conquistata." Turnus is his more immediate model for Argantes in the "Jerusalem Delivered."

84.

Has set us on our course, and been the guide
Through risk and hindrance of our roving feet;
This has for us smoothed mounts, and rivers dried,
From winter snatched the frost, from summer heat;
Calmed the sea's waves when loud the tempest cried,
Restrained, or sent the winds to aid our fleet.
This Hand has breached for us each lofty wall,
Made armèd troops before us flee and fall.

85.

'Tis hence our valour, hence our hope takes spring,—
Not from strength worn by many a toilsome year,
Not from our ships or force that Greece may bring,
Nor yet from succouring Franks with shield and spear.
So long as o'er us spreads the shadowing Wing,
We little reck what else is wanting here.
Who knows how God can strike, and how defend,
Will in his peril seek no other friend.

86.

But if He should deprive us of His aid
For sin of ours, or judgment hid from sight,
Who here would grieve in burial to be laid
Where Christ's own limbs received the burial rite?
We die, then, of who live not envious made;
We die,—our death pursues avenging might:
Nor yet shall Asia in our fate find gladness,
Nor need such death bedim our eyes with sadness."

—Canto II.

"Let him who rejects peace receive war," Argantes hastens to exclaim; and, gathering up his mantle like Fabius of old, he adds: "In this fold I bring thee peace or war; take which thou wilt." "War" is the answering shout of the chieftains who stand round Godfrey. Argantes hurls back on them their defiance,

shakes his mantle, and departs to join the defenders of Jerusalem; leaving Alethes to report to the King of Egypt the failure of their mission.

The short journey which remains for the Crusaders is accomplished by them next morning, after a sleepless night of anxious longing to behold the city where they would be.

3.

"Feathered their thoughts, their feet in wings were dight;
Swiftly they marched, yet were not tired thereby,
For willing minds make heaviest burdens light;
But when the gliding sun was mounted high,
Jerusalem, behold! appeared in sight,—
Jerusalem they view, they see, they spy;
Jerusalem, with merry noise they greet,
With joyful shouts and acclamations sweet.

4

As when a troop of jolly sailors row
Some new-found land and country to descry,
Through dangerous seas and under stars unknowe,
Thrall to the faithless waves and trothless sky,
If once the wishèd shore begin to show,
They all salute it with a joyful cry,
And each to other show the land in haste,
Forgetting quite their pains and perils past.

5.

To that delight which their first sight did breed,
That pleasèd so the secret of their thought,
A deep repentance did forthwith succeed
That reverent fear and trembling with it brought;
Scantly they durst their feeble eyes dispread
Upon that town where Christ was sold and bought,
Where for our sins He faultless suffered pain,
There where He died, and where He lived again.

6.

Soft words, low speech, deep sobs, sweet sighs, salt tears,
Rise from their breasts, with joy and pleasure mixed;
. . . . . .
Such noise their passions make, as when one hears
The hoarse sea-waves roar hollow rocks betwixt,
Or, as the wind in hoults and shady greaves,
A murmur makes among the boughs and leaves

7.

Their naked feet trod on the dusty way,
Following the ensample of their zealous guide;
Their scarfs, their crests, their plumes, and feathers gay
They quickly dofft, and willing laid aside;
Their molten hearts their wonted pride allay:
Along their watery cheeks warm tears down slide;
And then such secret speech as this, they used,
While to himself each one himself accused:—(F.)

8.

'Then, Lord, in this same place where Thou didst dye
With thousand streams ensanguined earth with red,
Can I not o'er that bitter memory
At least of tears two living fountains shed?
Ah! frozen heart, why, streaming through mine eye,
Dost thou not melt in drops of anguish bred?
Hard heart, why stony still, nor yet made new?
If tearless now, tears endless are thy due.'"

—Canto III.

It is in passages like these that Tasso shows us that he has caught the genuine crusading enthusiasm; and understood how what the love of country was to Greek or Roman, the love of the "better country" and of its invisible King is to Christians.

CHAPTER X.

HERMINIA AND ARMIDA.

The romance element in Tasso's poem naturally makes its presence known by the great prominence allotted in it to women. Its second canto has introduced us to the martial Clorinda. Its third and fourth make us acquainted with the contrasted forms of the lovely, virtuous Herminia; and the yet lovelier, but less virtuous Armida. Herminia is the King of Antioch's orphan daughter,—sheltered after his defeat and death at Jerusalem,—and hopelessly in love with her generous captor Tancred, whose heart, as we have already seen, is fixed elsewhere. Were not love's caprices unaccountable, we should marvel how the Sicilian prince could prefer the self-reliant Clorinda to the essentially womanly Herminia; who, timid except when emboldened by love, modest, gentle, and affectionate, wins every reader's heart. She is first presented to us standing on the ramparts beside King Aladdin—an innocent Helen, who is able, after her long captivity among the Christians, to answer this new Priam's question about their leaders in the plain below; trembling with shame for her hidden love at the sight of Tancred, and hardly able to reply

when the king asks her who the knight is who looks so terrible, and is bearing himself so bravely. She follows him with her eyes along the plain; she sees his encounter with Clorinda, and little dreams that the heart which the victor's courtesy had made her hope was hers, belongs to the wielder of the lance which she has seen shiver in hostile guise against his helmet.

But fair and delicate as are the tints with which Tasso has painted Herminia, his most glowing colours are reserved for Armida's bewildering beauty. The niece of the sorcerer King of Damascus is an enchantress in two senses—able to use the spells of Homer's Circe; but as able to bewitch by her own loveliness. Her uncle sends her forth to seduce the Christian knights from their enterprise; and she presents herself in their camp as a distressed damsel with her life endangered, dispossessed of her rightful throne by her cruel uncle, and seeking its restoration by their aid.

29.

"Not Argos, nay, not Cyprus, might behold,
Or Delos, such a robe, such beauty rare;
Now through her white veil shine her locks of gold,
Now flash uncovered making bright the air.
So, when the sky grows clear, now shines through fold
Of some white cloud the sun, anon more fair
Forth issuing from that cloud he darts each ray
Clearer around, and makes a double day.

30.

Her loosened hair the breeze has curled again
Which nature bade in curling waves to flow.
Her eyes seem misers and each glance restrain,
Lest men Love's treasure and their own should know.

Tender-hued roses are 'mid ivories fain
In that fair face scattered and mixed to blow;
But on those lips that Love's own breath has parted
Reddens the rose, alone and single-hearted."

Like one of Titian's most gorgeous beauties, with golden locks and vermeil and ivory cheeks, Armida kneels before Godfrey and tells the story of her wrongs; while, supremely lovely in her tears, she strives as she implores his help to ensnare his heart. But she strives in vain. She has before her not a Lancelot but a Galahad; and to swerve even in thought for a moment from his great emprise is to Godfrey an utter impossibility. He surveys Armida's beauty with an untroubled though pitying eye; promises her help after Jerusalem shall have been taken, but refuses to diminish his army before then. The enchantress, disappointed in one hope, seeks thereupon to move the more impressionable hearts of the young knights who surround her.

70.

"At this the Princess bent her eyes to ground,
And stood unmoved, though not unmarked, a space;
The secret bleeding of her inward wound
Shed heavenly dew upon her angel's face.
'Poor wretch,' quoth she, 'in tears and sorrows drowned,
Death be thy peace, the grave thy resting-place,
Since such thy hap that, lest thou mercy find,
The gentlest heart on earth is proved unkind.

71.

Where none attends what boots it to complain?
Men's froward hearts are moved with women's tears
As marble stones are pierced with drops of rain.
No plaints find passage through unwilling ears.
The tyrant (haply) would his wrath restrain,
Heard he these prayers ruthless Godfrey hears;

Yet not thy fault is this; my chance, I see,
Hath made even pity pitiless in thee.

72.

So both thy goodness and good hap denayed me,
Grief, sorrow, mischief, care, hath overthrown me;
The star that ruled my birthday hath betrayed me;
My Genius sees his charge, but dares not own me;
Of queen-like state my flight has disarrayed me;
My father died ere he five years had known me;
My kingdom lost, and lastly resteth now,
Down with the tree sith broke is every bough.'"—(F.)

She turns proudly away, so saying; but as she does so her tears flow forth afresh, and

75.

"Her cheeks on which the living water fell,
Bathing her garment's hem or e'er it dries,
The roses white and red resembled well,
Whereon the rory May-dew sprinkled lies,
When the fair morn first blusheth from her cell,
And breatheth balm from opened Paradise![1]
Aurora sees and loves their beauty fair,
And longs to pluck it to adorn her hair."

—Canto IV.

Godfrey's brother, the young Eustace, moved at once by compassion and by love, steps forward upon this, and vows that he can bear sword no longer if not suffered to perform the promise which he made when it was first girded on him—to use it in defence of oppressed maidens. The knights, his companions, say the same; and Godfrey, sorely against his better judgment, has to yield, and promise Armida the immediate aid of ten of their number. She delays her departure with these,

[1] These four pretty lines are also Fairfax's.

under various pretexts, sufficiently long to make all the younger knights, except Tancred and Rinaldo, fall in love with her; so that, when at last she sets off with ten defenders chosen by lot, the rest steal after her by night, leaving the Christian camp but ill provided with champions.

For though Rinaldo has thus far resisted Armida's charms, he forsakes the camp even sooner than does her train—driven thence by anger and offended pride, as they by love. The squadron of knights adventurers—to which he and they alike belong—has lost its leader in the first skirmish under the sacred walls. Dudon, slain by Argantes, and buried with solemn rites, has been dismissed by Godfrey to his last resting-place with the words—

68.

"We need not mourn for thee here laid to rest;
Earth is thy bed and not thy grave; the skies
Are for thy soul the cradle and the nest;
There live, for here thy glory never dies.
For like a Christian knight and champion blest
Thou didst both live and die: now feed thine eyes
With thy Redeemer's sight, where crowned with bliss
Thy faith, zeal, merit well deserving is."—(F.)

—Canto III.

And the next business is to choose a captain of the adventurers in Dudon's place. Gernando of Norway competes with Rinaldo for the vacant post, insults him past endurance, and is run through the body by the fiery youth; who, rather than submit to be tried for his offence, withdraws afterwards from the army in sullen displeasure.

Other causes for anxiety arise,—the rumoured advance

of the Egyptian host, and the intercepting of convoys of provisions by the marauding Arabs. Godfrey, who meets defections and adverse rumours with unshaken firmness, has, however, still left him in Tancred a brave arm to execute what he as head may plan. But his aid, too, is to be taken from him.

Argantes chooses this inconvenient moment for a challenge to the bravest of the Christians to meet him in single combat. He is ready, he says, to fight their four best in turn, and after he has disposed of them, to encounter a fifth. Godfrey bids Tancred repress this arrogance; who is gladly going forth to meet his adversary, when, for his misfortune, his eye falls on Clorinda, to whom Aladdin has assigned the office of keeping the ground for Argantes. Placed on an eminence, her glittering armour covered by a surcoat whiter than the sifted snow on the Alps, her vizor raised, she so dazzles Tancred's eyes by her beauty that for a moment he forgets all else to gaze upon it. Another knight, called Otho, profits by his delay, imprudently takes his place, and is overthrown. Tancred, rudely awakened from his dream, but too late to stay Otho's advance, comes forward at once to avenge his fall. And then begins a terrible combat. The mighty lances are laid in rest, the horses spurred forward, and Tancred and Argantes meet with a crash as of thunder.

"Upon their helms their lances long they broke;
And up to heaven flew splinters, sparks, and smoke.

41.

The shock made all the towers and turrets quake,
And woods and mountains all nigh-hand resound;

Yet could not all that force and fury shake
The valiant champions, nor their persons wound."—(F.)

They disengage themselves from their fallen horses and draw their swords. Tancred's superior skill gives him some advantage over the vast strength of his opponent. Twice wounded by him without drawing blood in return, the Circassian lays aside all thought of his own defence, and rushes on his foe with strokes "which make earth tremble and the sky flash fire." Blood now flows freely on both sides, and both heroes might easily have been slain. But friendly night descends to separate them: the heralds arrange terms, and the sixth day is fixed for the renewal of the fight, to give time for their wounds to heal.

Now while the woman whom Tancred loved stood, outwardly at least, a calm spectator of his peril, it was far otherwise with the woman who loved him. Herminia, from her watch on the high palace tower, suffered agonies of fear for his sake: each blow that rang on his armour echoed in her own heart, which whispered to her, "He there in danger of death is thy beloved." So when she heard that the desperate combat was only adjourned, when she was summoned to use her skill in leechcraft to put Argantes in a condition to finish it victoriously, her feelings became more than she could bear. She resisted indeed the temptation to poison the wounds she was dressing,—to no such ill office could her pious and virginal hand stoop; but the longing to apply her healing herbs instead to Tancred's hurts became uncontrollable. There was indeed a contest,—set forth by Tasso in many inimitable octaves,—for some time doubtful

in her breast between those two potent opposites—Love and Honour. But Love carries the day; and Herminia resolves, under cover of the night, to go forth with a faithful squire and a handmaid—dressed in a suit of Clorinda's armour, which she steals—to try and cure Tancred. It is not till the city gates have opened at the sight of Clorinda's crest, and at the woman's voice which pronounced her name, that the full peril of her enterprise dawns upon Herminia; but then, timidly halting in a solitary place a little way from the walls, she sends her squire forward to find out Tancred's tent, and to ask of him a safe-conduct for an unnamed lady.

103.

"Night had come down, her veil with stars dispread,
Without one cloud to dim outstretching clear;
The rising moon her radiant lustre shed,
Touching to living pearls the dew-drops near.
The enamoured maid her passion softly said
For those pure lights and holy fires to hear;
Trusting the love that long had grieved her mind
To the mute plains, and to the silence kind.

104.

Then, looking on the camp, she said: 'O fair
Tents of the Latins to these longing eyes,
From you there breathes revivifying air
To comfort me after great miseries!
So may kind heaven an honoured rest prepare
For me from griefs endured and agonies
As 'tis in you alone I seek its charms;
Nor look for peace save in the midst of arms.

105.

Receive me then; and let me find in you
That pity which Love promised me, safe stored,

The which a happy prisoner once I knew
From him my gentle ever gracious lord!'"
—Canto VI.

These hopes and aspirations are harshly interrupted. Impatient at her squire's delay, Herminia had advanced a little too near the camp; and, at this moment, a moonbeam glistening on her silver crest reveals it to two Latin scouts. One of these, whose father had fallen by Clorinda's hand, casts his lance at her representative, and rouses the camp to the pursuit; so that Tancred, who had despatched the squire with a courteous message to the unknown lady, learns to his inexpressible delight that it was Clorinda who sought him, and at the self-same time to his horror that she is in imminent peril for his sake. What can he do but leave his bed, mount his steed, and hasten to her rescue? But he finds her not, any more than do those who seek her personator with a worse intent. For Herminia, says Tasso, scared at her thirsty approach to the sweet waters of love by the clash of arms,—like a hind terrified from the fountain by the hunter's shout,—fled, as it might do, wildly, apart from her attendants, and her fleet horse soon bore her out of reach of her enemies.

Tancred, after a night spent in vain researches, prepares to ride back to the camp. Not knowing the way, he accepts the guidance of a courier, who professes to have come from his uncle, Bohemond, at Antioch; but who is, in reality, an emissary of Armida's, and who leads him to her castle, which stands in the Dead Sea. Night has come by this time; and the treacherous guide bids him lodge in a fortress newly won from the Saracens by a Christian knight. Tancred hesitates;

when there rides forth along the drawbridge a cavalier of fierce and disdainful bearing, who bids him at once surrender himself Armida's prisoner, or take oath to serve at her bidding against the army of the Cross. Tancred knows the knight well. He is the Gascon Rambald, turned renegade for Armida's sake. His comrades, as Tancred afterwards learns, have all refused such baseness, and are her prisoners in the castle's dungeons. "This right hand has been sent to punish your apostasy," is the Christian champion's reply; and a single combat at once begins, to witness which Armida, amidst a blaze of magic light, appears on a lofty balcony. But Rambald is no match for Tancred, at whose glorious name the colour forsook his craven cheek; and, after a desperate resistance, he takes flight into the castle. Tancred imprudently follows him; a portcullis descends, and renders him in his turn a prisoner. He finds that, "like an eel into an eel-trap," as Tasso says, he has rushed into a dungeon out of which he cannot find his way; where he remains gnashing his teeth with vexation, while the sixth day comes and goes, and Argantes rides proudly into the lists and calls for Tancred, and scornfully comments on his absence.

But what meantime became of Herminia, the innocent cause of this great misfortune? Half-dead with terror, her courser carried her where it pleased through thicket and forest. All night she fled, not daring to look back and see whether she was pursued or not: all day she wandered aimlessly. Towards evening her horse stopped, tired out, by the bank of the river Jordan; and she, as weary, alighted from it, and laid her down to sleep on the grass. And then follows the charming idyl, which,

composed by Tasso during his last peaceful days at Consandoli, has been found by all his readers so refreshing in its pastoral verdure and stillness amid the glare and heat and the clash of arms in which his poem perforce so largely deals.

5.

"She woke not till the birds right joyously
She heard converse, saluting fair the day,
The river murmur, and each shrub and tree,
And with the waves and flowers the breezes play.
Her languid eyes she opened, but could see
No shepherd 'mid those lonely pastures stray,
Yet seemed 'mid waves and boughs a voice to hear
That called her back to sigh and shed the tear.

6.

But while she weeps, her lamentations fall
To silence at clear sounds her ear that greet,
Which seem, and are, rude accents pastoral,
Sung to an oaten pipe untrained but sweet.
Rising, and slowly moving where they call,
She sees an old man on a shady seat,
His baskets weaving, with his flock hard by
Who listens to three children's melody.

7.

These, startled by the sudden flash of arms,
Unwonted there, shrank trembling with affright:
With kind salute Herminia gently charms
Their fears, and bares her eyes and gold locks bright:
'Pursue your work,' she says, 'secure from harms,
Ye happy men, favoured in heaven's own sight;
For these my arms no cruel warfare bring
To your fair tasks, or the sweet songs you sing.'"

Then she goes on to ask how they have managed thus far to escape from more dangerous warriors than herself;

and receives for answer that, besides heaven's kind protection, lowly heads like theirs do not attract the lightning, or their poverty entice the spoiler's hand. The old shepherd served once in a king's palace, as he tells her; but his happiest day there was that on which he said adieu to the Court. Now the clear water quenches his thirst from an unpoisoned cup, his garden and his flock supply him with cheap dainties, and he is happy watching the fishes, birds, and beasts in their careless freedom.

His calm words fall like balm on Herminia's troubled heart, and she determines to seek an asylum amid these honest shepherds, to whom she tells part of her sad story. The old man weeps with her; he and his wife show her all kindness; and Tasso leaves her for a season sheltered by their humble cot, watching and milking their sheep, with her royal beauty shrouded in russet garb, and finding some solace to her sorrow as

19.

"Oft, while to shun the summer heats she sees
The sheep lie panting 'neath the shady groves,
She cuts on beechen-bark or laurel-trees
In thousand ways adorned the name she loves:
Graving her passion's infelicities
And strange sad end, from tree to tree she roves;
Then, reading over her own words again,
Down her fair cheeks the crystal tear-drops rain.

20.

'Ye friendly trees, she then would weeping say,
'Keep in safe charge this story of my woe;
That so, if some true lover shall one day
Sojourn awhile your grateful shade below,
Sweet pity to his heart may find her way

When you my ills so great, so varied, show;
And he may say: Ah, too unjust the meed
By Love and Fortune to such faith decreed!

21.

'The chance may fall, if Heaven benignant e'er
Will listen kindly to a mortal's prayers,
That one day through these forests may come here
He who for me now haply nothing cares,
And, turning then his eyes where buried near
This weak frame rest after long wandering shares,
May give late guerdon to my miseries
Of few scant tear-drops and some troubled sighs.'"

—Canto VII.

CHAPTER XI.

RAYMOND OF TOULOUSE AND SOLYMAN OF NICÆA.

While Herminia is weeping beside the Jordan, and Tancred vainly raging against his prison-bars in the Dead Sea fortress, Argantes, after a sleepless night of anxiety to renew the combat, rises before the dawn, calls for his richest armour, and, flaming in it like some baleful comet, already sees in his hopes the Christian champion overthrown. The herald summons Tancred, and the rest if they will, to the field. There is silence for a moment among the crusaders. Then Godfrey, rather than see his army disgraced, prepares to expose his own life in the encounter. But this the veteran Count Raymond of Toulouse forbids; and, wishing that he still possessed the youthful vigour with which he met and slew the German Leopold before the eyes of the Emperor and his Court, undertakes the adventure himself. Shamed by his example, others demand the fight. But the lot decides in Raymond's favour, and the brave old man rides forth to the field, where Argantes is scoffing at Tancred's cowardice; and, seeing what a mighty adversary awaits him, thus directs his prayer to God:—

78.

"O Lord! that diddest save, keep, and defend
Thy servant David from Goliath's rage,
And broughtest that huge giant to his end,
Slain by a faithful child of tender age;
Like grace, O Lord! like mercy now extend.
Let me this vile blasphemous pride assuage,
That all the world may to Thy glory know,
Old men and babes Thy foes can overthrow."—(F.)
—Canto VII.

In answer, Raymond's guardian angel is sent down to protect him with that shield of shining diamond which hangs beside Michael's spear in the armoury of heaven, for the defence of holy cities and just princes. Argantes is amazed to find his strokes prove vain; now eluded by the swiftness of Raymond's courser Aquiline, now repelled by the invisible shield, against which at last his good sword shivers in his hand.

The Count's prayer seems about to be granted, when Argantes is rescued from his imminent peril by the old device of the fourth book of the "Iliad." An evil spirit takes Clorinda's shape, and prevails on the expert archer, Oraddin, to shoot an arrow which slightly wounds Raymond. Godfrey charges forward with his cavalry to avenge the treachery which has thus violated the truce between the two armies, and there is a general *mêlée;* in which, spite of brave deeds performed by Argantes, the Christians have the advantage, driving their foes to the city gates. But there a storm raised by the paynim's faithful allies, the evil spirits, sets full in the face of the crusaders; Clorinda charges them vigorously, and they, in their turn, are driven back.

Sad news comes with the morning light. Sweyn, the

King of Denmark's only son, on his march to join the crusaders, has fallen in with Solyman, the dispossessed Sultan of Nicæa, at the head of the Arabs whom he has subsidised with Egyptian gold, and been cut off with his followers nearly to a man. One solitary survivor makes his way to the Christian camp, and narrates his prince's valorous exploits on the road; and how, when they unexpectedly found a large army barring their path on the confines of Palestine, when many others turned pale at the news—

"Only our noble lord was altered nought
In look, in face, in gesture, or in thought;

15.

But said—'A crown prepare you to possess
Of martyrdom, or happy victory;
For this I hope, for that I wish no less,
Of greater merit and of greater glory.
Brethren, this camp will shortly be, I guess,
A temple, sacred to our memory,
To which the holy men of future age
To view our graves shall come in pilgrimage.'"—(F.)

These words were made good by their speaker. Outnumbered by twenty to one, Sweyn and his friends so fought through the night as to make their assailants buy their victory dear. When morning came, and showed of his two thousand men scarce a hundred alive, the gallant Dane bade the few survivors follow to heaven in the path plainly traced for them by their comrades' blood; and, "glad to see death so near," went on slaying long after he ought to have sunk exhausted by his own wounds, till at last he fell dead before the assault of Solyman and his band. "I," says the narrator, "did

my best to follow him, and fell at last for dead among the slain. When I recovered my senses, night had come. A light twinkling afar drew nearer, and two hermits bent over me with their torches. One of them spoke a blessing over me, and forthwith my wounds were healed. Rising to my feet, I recognised the body of my dead chief, pointed out by a ray from a resplendent star.

33.

"Not prone he lay; but as his longing thought
He ever set above the stars on high,
So now with face upturned the heavens he sought,
Like man whose soul there tendeth constantly.
His right hand firmly clenched, like one who fought,
Grasped his good sword to strike the foeman nigh;
The other on his breast right humbly laid,
Showed how for pardon to his God he prayed."

The story ends by the sword being taken from the dead man's grasp and sent to Rinaldo, that with it he may avenge its former owner on Solyman.

The Dane's inquiry for him rouses fresh regret in the camp for the young hero's absence. Men begin to rehearse his great deeds, and to wish for his return. It is at this critical moment that news is brought that the brave champion has been murdered, and that, too probably, by Godfrey's orders. Foragers bear in battered armour, and a rent and bloody surcoat, known by all men as Rinaldo's, which they have stripped from a headless corpse two days' journey from the camp. There is a seditious outcry among the rank and file of the army, instigated by Argillano, himself set on by a Fury, for vengeance upon Godfrey as the assassin. With a prayer

that his innocence may be revealed, the chief calmly confronts the angry crowd. Before his majestic demeanour their clamour sinks down to silence; and ashamed of their suspicions, they lay aside their arms, and allow their leader to be led to prison.

84.

"Fame is a wingèd warrior they beheld,
With semblant fierce and furious look that stood,
And in his left hand had a splendent shield
Wherewith he covered safe their chieftain good;
His other hand a naked sword did wield,
From which distilling fell the lukewarm blood,
The blood pardie of many a realm and town
Whereon the Lord His wrath had pourèd down."—(F.)
—Canto VIII.

No sooner has Alecto seen the failure of this design, than she provokes Solyman to a night attack on the crusading camp with his Arab host. He makes an inspiriting address to his men, bidding them regain the wealth of Syria by plundering the weakly defended Christian tents; and dashes forward at their head, their wild shouts mingling with the clash of drum and cymbal. At a signal from the Fury, the forces of the besieged sally forth to help his enterprise; while a darker troop of auxiliaries rises from the Stygian gloom, to cast bewildering terrors on the Christian host. In the dimness of their supernatural twilight the Soldan's dragon-crest gleams baleful, and seems alive to alarmed beholders, as he routs the advanced posts, forces his way into the camp, and slays the defenders; here catalogued by Tasso with Homeric precision. Matters look ill for the Christians for a while; but Godfrey quickly

sends Guelph to keep back the troops that sally from Jerusalem, and goes himself, with the forces that gather round him, to confront Solyman. For a season the fight is maintained on equal terms,—deeds being done on both sides worthy to be, not shrouded by darkness, but, displayed by the brightest daylight in a world-wide theatre. Presently the archangel Michael is sent down from heaven.

62.

"The horrid darkness and the shadows dun
Dispersèd he with his eternal wings;
The flames which from his heavenly eyes outrun
Begild the earth and all her sable things.
After a storm so spreadeth forth the sun
His rays, and binds the clouds in golden strings;
Or in the stillness of a moonshine even
A falling star so glideth down from heaven."—(F.)

Poised in mid-air with brandished lance, the celestial warrior commands the army of evil spirits to depart from among the paynim host to their own abodes. Sighing and groaning, they quit the golden starlight for the nether glooms in multitudes so vast that

"The birds that follow Titan's hottest ray
Pass not by so great flocks to warmer coasts;
Nor leaves by so great numbers fall away
When winter nips them with his new-come frosts."—(F.)
—Canto IX.

But the departure of these auxiliaries is scarcely felt at first by the Saracens; the void it leaves being supplied for a while by the indomitable courage of Argantes and Clorinda. Argillano bursts forth from his prison and joins the fray, only to redeem his errors by a soldier's

death.[1] Godfrey indeed makes some impression on the band of disciplined Turks, which forms the nucleus of Solyman's army; but the sun is nevertheless rising on an action as yet undecided, when his beams display an advancing squadron of warriors, before whose prowess the coward Arab flees, and the courageous Turk falls. The fugitive many are mown down, the brave few sell their lives dearly; the victory remains with Godfrey, and Argantes and Clorinda draw their troops back within the city. Solyman, indeed, has neither fled nor fallen; but his strength is exhausted, he is covered with blood and sweat, his sword is blunted with long use, and he deliberates whether to turn it against his own breast, or retreat, that he may fight the Christians on a future day. It is on this latter course that he resolves. Ismeno heals his wounds by magic, and transports him in a cloud into Aladdin's council-chamber; and thenceforth Solyman completes the triad of chiefs who preside over the defence of Jerusalem.

As soon as the battle is over, the opportune reinforcement which helped so materially to gain it present themselves to Godfrey as the fifty knights led astray by Armida. They tell with shame how she duped and imprisoned them; how they experienced her power to metamorphose them into brute shapes, yet held fast their faith in spite of her threats and promises; and how, sent as her prisoners under a strong guard to the King of Egypt, Tancred—the manner of whose capture we have seen—with the rest, they were delivered by

[1] The whole passage, Canto IX., 75-86, is a skilful mosaic from Homer, Virgil, and Lucan, and one of Tasso's closest classical imitations.

the wandering Rinaldo, who, single-handed, attacked and defeated their escort. The joy of the Christian camp is made complete by this; since it has not only regained its strayed champions, but obtained clear proof that the tale of Rinaldo's death, made so plausible by Armida's skilful use of his cast-off suit of armour, is but one more of her delusions.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FIRST ASSAULT—CLORINDA'S ENTERPRISE.

EMBOLDENED by their victory over Solyman, and strengthened by the return of the knights, the crusaders now prepare to assault the city. The battering-rams and other engines of offence are in readiness; and at Peter the Hermit's bidding, the army goes in solemn procession to implore the divine blessing on the undertaking. Peter leads the way, carrying the banner of the Cross; the choir follows, led by the two soldier-bishops, William and Adhemar; then follow the captains and the soldiers,—all alike, on their way to Mount Olivet where the altar has been raised, chanting the Litany.

7.

"Thee Father, Thee, that Father's equal Son,
Thee, breathed from Both united forth in love;
Thee, Virgin-mother of the Holy One,
Incarnate God, they call to help above;
O chiefs who heaven's bright squadrons, as they run
Their course, in thrice-repeated circles move;
O saint, who once the brow divine didst lave
Pure in its manhood by the Jordan's wave,

8.

On you they call; thee, too, foundation-stone
Of God's high house securely built and strong,
Where to thy worthy successor alone
The keys of grace and pardon now belong;
Those who with thee the victor-death made known,
The heavenly kingdom's heralds' holy throng;
With those who came to make your witness good,
Confirming it in tortures with their blood:

9.

Those also who the road to heaven made clear
To wandering mortals, by their pen or voice;
Christ's faithful handmaid also, true and dear,
Who of the nobler portion made her choice;
Maids who, in chaste cell cloistered, God revere,
And, to high nuptials with Him called, rejoice;
With virgins who their truth in torments proved,
Whom kings nor nations from their fealty moved.

. . . . . .

11.

There march the host, and as they march they sing,
Making deep vale resound and hillside steep,
From mount and hollow cave their accents spring,
As echo everywhere awakes from sleep;
Some woodland choir their chant seemed answering,
Hid 'mid the leafy boughs and caverns deep,
So clearly could be heard, now Christ's great Name,
Now Mary's, as in sweet response they came."

Mass said, all is prepared for the assault, and next day—

19.

"Yet doubtful was the dawn, the birth of day
Yet in the eastern sky was immature;

No plough was cleaving through hard clods its way,
Nor shepherd to the mead returned; secure
Slept yet the birds upon each leafy spray;
Nor horn, nor hound, is heard in wood or moor;
When from the morning-trump resounds the cry
'To Arms!'—'to arms' loud echoes from the sky."
—Canto XI.

Godfrey insists, notwithstanding Raymond's remonstrance against imperilling the commander-in-chief, on leading the assault, saying that, when he took the Cross at Clermont from Pope Urban's hand, he had vowed to serve God as a private soldier might; and that he meant to perform that vow. Other chiefs follow his example, and prepare to mount the scaling-ladders in light cuirasses. First come the slingers and archers to clear the ramparts so far as may be of their defenders; and for the same end balista and catapult discharge their powerful missiles, whilst the assailants advance to the foot of the walls under a pent-house of shields. Having filled the dry ditch with stones and fagots, they proceed to set up their ladders. Meantime the battering-ram strives to make a breach in the wall, and Godfrey's tower is moved close up to it. This most formidable of the crusaders' engines, fitted with armed men, has its topmost storey as high as the city bulwark; and the object of the assailants is to grapple the wall's summit with their movable bridge, and board it like some huge ship of war.

The besieged are as diligent in the defence as are the Christians in the attack. They throw sulphur and bitumen on the invaders, and hurl down heavy stones upon them; they guard the wall against the

battering-rams by counter-protections, and push the tower away from it by poles. A perpetual hailstorm of darts and arrows rains down on their assailants. Seven Frank leaders are slain or disabled by Clorinda's bow; who stands, like Diana in her vengeful mood, on the corner tower. Argantes and Solyman rise gigantic above the rest of the garrison; the latter closing up the breach which is at last effected in the wall by standing in it to defy all efforts at entrance—the former making it his business to repel the movable tower. Yet both might have been overpowered by the onward rush of the Christians had not these last lost their three principal leaders' help at this critical moment,—Guelph and Raymond being each knocked down by stones cast from the ramparts, and Godfrey disabled by one of Clorinda's arrows. Argantes and Solyman then sally forth, and act as assailants in their turn. Tancred has much ado to save the valued wooden tower from being burned; and although Godfrey—like Æneas—marvellously healed of his arrow-wound, returning to his post, renews the assault, he is soon obliged, by the approach of night, to content himself with drawing off his men in good order. The unwieldy tower loses two wheels as it is being dragged back, and has to be left under a guard to undergo the necessary repairs at some little distance from the camp.

This circumstance inspires Clorinda with the bold design of issuing forth by night and destroying it,—a deed which, in the slowness with which warlike engines were then prepared, might possibly delay the next assault till the arrival of the relieving army from Egypt. She seeks Argantes, and tells him of

her project, bidding him—should it cost her life—take care of her handmaids and of her foster-father. Argantes insists on sharing her fate, whether glory in life or death. The king approves the design; Ismeno goes to prepare a bituminous compound which shall insure the desired conflagration, while Clorinda lays aside plume and crest, and puts on black armour suitable to a nocturnal expedition.

This sign of a dangerous undertaking dismays her faithful old guardian Arsetes, and he implores her, by the memory of his past care for her, and by his hair whitened in her service, to give it up. The warrior-maid refuses: a power unknown to herself is urging her on.

"Hear something before unknown to you," says the old man at last, "and see if it cannot change your determination." He then narrates to Clorinda the story of her birth.[1] She is the daughter of the Christian king of Abyssinia,—the white child of black parents. Her pious mother's devout contemplation of a picture of St George fighting the dragon on behalf of a fair-complexioned maiden wrought this marvel. But a great terror seized her when her babe was born; for how could she hope that her jealous husband would think this explanation to be the true one. So the unhappy queen determined to show him a new-born black child in its place; and sadly committed her as yet unbaptised infant, first to the care of God and St George—with the prayer that she might be as chaste as her mother, but more fortunate—and then to the charge of her trusty

[1] Borrowed by Tasso from one of the earliest of novels—the "Theagenes and Chariclea" of Heliodorus.

eunuch Arsetes. He, as he says, weeping himself, took the babe from the pale and fainting queen, and carried it, hid in a basket of flowers, forth from the palace. Twice ere it was two years old was it in peril of death—once when its guardian's terror abandoned it to a hungry tigress, and once when he dropped it in a river, across which he was swimming pursued by thieves. But the tigress suckled the babe, let it fondle her, and walked away. The waters bore it unharmed to the shore, which its protector hardly reached; and the night after, a warrior appeared to him in a dream, and said that he was the child's true guardian, who had made wild beasts pity her and waves forbear to drown her, and that he had come to command her immediate baptism. But Arsetes was a bigoted Mohammedan, and so when he awoke he disregarded this injunction. For many years it was not repeated; but now, says the old man, "in my slumber yesterday I saw the self-same image, only with angrier countenance. His voice, too, was louder, as he said reproachfully, 'The hour is nigh when Clorinda will at once change life and destiny, but to your sorrow.' Oh then, forbear to run this risk; it may be that we have been fighting against the true faith."

Clorinda remains thoughtful for a while—for she too has seen a vision in her sleep. Then she determines in favour of the faith in which she has been brought up; and, resolving to yield to no coward fears, departs on her errand with Argantes.

They succeed admirably. Creeping stealthily up to the wooden tower, and, as soon as they are heard, scat-

tering its defenders by a vigorous onslaught, they apply the combustibles; then as the guard rally to the attack, retreat, seeing behind them the rising flames which, not to be extinguished by all the efforts of the Christians, reduce to ashes in a few minutes the work of many months.

CHAPTER XIII.

DEATH OF CLORINDA.

Pursued closely by two squadrons of Christians, Argantes and Clorinda nevertheless make good their way back to the Golden Gate of Jerusalem, which opens to admit them, while Solyman rushes out to scatter their pursuers. It is then shut, both being supposed safe within; but in point of fact, Clorinda, who darted forth to return a blow which she had received, has been left outside unperceived in the darkness. For a moment, when she finds the gate barred behind her, she gives herself up for lost; but no one seems to observe her in her undistinguished armour, and she is walking unperceived away from among the Christians, when Tancred, who had seen her cut down one of them, follows and overtakes her before she can reach the postern at which she is aiming. He, deceived like the rest by the absence of the silver tigress, thinks he has before him a brave paynim knight, and feels a wish for a passage at arms with him. His challenge is accepted. Seeing his foe on foot, he courteously dismounts from his charger, and a single combat begins, so nobly fought that it deserved rescuing from the obscurity in which the night involved it.

55.

"No will have they to parry or retreat,
Or shun a blow; for skill has here no place.
No strokes now feigned, now full, now scantling, beat,—
The darkness and their rage leave art no space;
Their swords half-way with horrid clangour meet,
Their feet one footprint keep, none backward trace:
Their hands still moving, feet aye firm remain,—
No cut descends, no thrust is made, in vain.

. . . . . .

57.

Thrice in his stalwart arms that maid the knight
Presses full close; as often she the grasp
Loosens of that embrace so cleaving tight,—
Fierce foe's embrace, not lover's tender clasp.
Their swords once more then plying, they their light
Bedim in many wounds: with panting gasp,
Wearied and faint, both at the last retire,
And after their long toil awhile respire.

58.

Each on the other looks, the blood-drained weight
Of his own body on his sword-hilt throwing.
Now waxes pale that star which shines most late,
Before dawn's earliest fire in orient glowing,
Tancred beholds his foeman's blood more great
In stream, his own from fewer wounds outflowing,—
Grows glad and proud at it. Ah! foolish mind
Of man, upraised by fortune's every wind!

59.

Wretch! wherefore joy'st thou? Ah! how sad shall be
Thy triumph, and thy boastings luckless all!
If life be left thee, from thine eyes a sea
Of tears for each drop of that blood shall fall."

In this breathing-time Tancred invites his adversary, whose valour has thoroughly won his respect, to make

known his name, that, whether vanquished or victor, he may know who gives honour to his victory, or receives it from his defeat. Clorinda's reply is a fierce refusal. "But," adds she, "whoever I may be, I am one of the two who set the great tower on fire."

62.

"Ire to their hearts returns and back to war
Bears them, though weak and weary. Conflict dread
Whence strength has died, whence art is banished far,
Where fury fights alone in both their stead!
Portals how bloody and how spacious! mar
Their arms and flesh, where'er with gashes red
Each sword strikes home: if life her steps arrest
And go not out, wrath binds her to each breast.

63.

As the Egean deep, though North Wind cease,
Or South, which tossed it all and shook before,
Grows not the calmer, but without release
Its troubled waves still swollen break and roar;
E'en so, though as their veins the blood-stream flees
The strength that nerved their arms to blows gives o'er,
They own the former impulse yet, and still
Keep adding, as it bids them, ill to ill.

64.

But now, behold arrived the fatal hour
That ends Clorinda's life. In angry mood
His sword's point through her bosom fair with power
He thrusts, which greedy, plunged there, drinks her blood,
And the vest wrought with many a golden flower
(Her breast's soft cincture light) fills with hot flood.
Now feels she o'er her spirit death prevailing;
Languid and sick her weary foot is failing.

65.

He follows up his victory, with threat
Upon the wounded maiden pressing nigh.

She, while she fell, her weak voice raised till met
Her latest words his ear ; words taught her by
A spirit new within her heart as yet,—
Spirit of Faith, of Hope, of Charity :
Power breathed by God, who chooses one defying
His law through life, now for His handmaid dying.

66.

'Friend, thou hast conquered : I forgive thee ;—so
Forgive thou too, not this now fearless clay,—
Nay, but my soul ; pray for it, and bestow
Baptism to wash my every sin away.'
In these weak accents sounds a note of woe
And sweetness past the power of man to say,
Which goes down to his heart, his anger quells,
His eyes to tears disposes and compels.

67.

No long way off from out the mountain's breast
Trickled with murmurs forth a little rill:
He ran there, filled his helm, and that behest
Holy and high turned sadly to fulfil.
He felt his hand all tremulous divest,
And give to sight that brow though unknown still.
He saw her, knew her ; voice before that vision,
And motion fled. Sad sight ! sad recognition !

68.

Nor died he yet ; rather his every power
To guard his heart he in that moment drew,
And, forcing down his anguish, turned to dower
With life through water whom his weapon slew,
While he the sacred words pronounced that hour
Her joy-changed face a smile of rapture knew :
She seemed to say, blithe amidst dying, 'Lo !
Heaven opens to me, and in peace I go.'

69.

Then pallor, beauteous still, her forehead white
Tinges, as violets among lilies thrown ;

Her eyes on heaven are fixed, and on that sight
Of pity heaven and sun seem gazing down:
Her cold, bare hand uplifted toward the knight
In place of any words his peace makes known,
Sure pledged. Thus passes from the earth away
That beauteous maid, as if asleep she lay."

Tancred falls as if dead beside her, and is carried back to the camp, along with Clorinda's dead body, by a party of foragers. When his senses return, the sight of the ruin which his hand has wrought makes him tear the bandages from his wounds, and refuse to live. The venerable Peter's stern remonstrance withholds him from hastening to a "double death;" but his lamentations continue.

90.

"Her, at the setting, or the rising, sun,
With wearied voice he calls, and prays and weeps;
As nightingale, when churlish hand has won
Her callow brood from out her nest, aye keeps
Sad watch alone, wailing till night be done,—
The while her mournful song in sorrow steeps
The air and groves. At last as day appears
His eyes close, sleep glides into them through tears

91.

Lo! in a dream, with starry robe, is seen
By him the lady of so many sighs—
Far lovelier grown; but that celestial sheen
Adorns, not hides her features from his eyes.
With tender pity in her face serene
She seems to say, while all his tears she dries:
'Behold my beauty and my joy; thus blest,
Faithful and loved, charm all thy grief to rest.

92.

'Such am I, thine the gift; thine erring hand
Snatched me from out the mortal company;
Thy pious care of saints immortal band,
In God's own bosom, made me member free.
There raised, all rapt in loving bliss I stand;
There too I hope a place prepared for thee,
Where thou in the great Sun, the Day eterne,
His beauties, and mine own, shalt glad discern,

93.

'If thine ownself thou envy not the skies,
Nor, thine own erring senses following, stray.
Live, know I love thee, nor my love disguise,
As much as ought created love we may.'
Thus while she spoke zeal flashed from out her eyes,
In brightness far transcending earthly ray;
Then hid she from him in her depth of light,
And with fresh comfort vanished from his sight."

Cheered by this vision, Tancred rouses himself to give the order for Clorinda's funeral; attended by the crusaders in the pomp of a long torch-light procession, in which her arms are borne to be suspended above her grave. By that grave, so soon as his weakness permits, he is himself found weeping, and vowing his unalterable fidelity to his lost lady, both in life and death.

99.

"Loving I shall depart: day happy found
Whene'er it be, but yet more highly blest
If, as I wander now thy grave around,
I then be gathered in upon thy breast.

Friends be our souls in heaven together bound,
Our ashes sepulchred together rest.
That which life never had let death obtain:
O glorious fate! if such my hopeful gain."

—Canto XII.

News of the sad disaster has meantime reached Jerusalem. Argantes, inconsolable at not having been at hand to protect his noble sister-in-arms, vows at least to revenge her death on Tancred; and his public promise to that effect consoles the populace, who had been lamenting their brave defender's fall with wailings, sad as if their city were already taken.

It is little that any translation can do to exhibit the tender beauty and pathetic sweetness with which Tasso has delineated the unique situation which, unbeholden to his wonted precedents, he has here devised—which, in any version nevertheless, by the singular interest of the story arrests the reader's attention. The Achilles of the lost Æthiopis reverenced in death a beauty which, in the living Penthesilea, had left his heart untouched. The Camilla of Virgil is slain by the hand of one wholly indifferent to her charms. While, in modern poetry, Marphisa, Bradamante, and Britomart come unscathed and unscarred out of their many perils; and the triumphant daughter of Aymon, after war's alarms are over, weds (as does Spenser's Amazon) her chosen knight in peace. It was reserved to Tasso to think of a death the most heartrending, and yet the most honourable, for his pure-minded and grand heroine, and of a close, sad beyond expression, for his hero's hopeless and chivalric devotion;—to bring about, in the simplest and most natural way possible, an unspeakable tragedy, and

yet at the same time to calm the reader's grief and his own by the glorious sight of an opening heaven; of healing waters bestowing life from the hand which dealt death; of a soul departing enlightened by death's approach, and seeking just in time the passport to the life everlasting.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ENCHANTED FOREST—RINALDO'S RECALL.

WHILE there is weeping in Jerusalem for Clorinda's loss, Ismeno is hard at work trying to secure the fruits of her last enterprise. He knows that the crusaders must replace their lost engines with timber taken from the gloomy forest which still clothes some of the valleys near; so he betakes himself there by night, and summons the evil spirits with spells as potent as those of Lucan's Witch to guard its trees.

6.

" He in the circle set one foot unshod,
And whispered dreadful charms in ghastly wise;
Three times (for witchcraft loveth numbers odd)
Toward the east he turned, and westward thrice;
He struck the earth thrice with his charmèd rod,
Wherewith dead bones he makes from graves to rise;
And thrice the ground with naked foot he smote;
And thus he cried aloud with thundering note:

7.

' Hear! hear! ye spirits all that whilome fell,
Cast down from heaven with dint of roaring thunder;
Hear! ye amid the empty air that dwell,
And storms and showers pour on these kingdoms under;

Hear! all ye devils that lie in deepest hell,
And rend with torments damnèd ghosts asunder:
And, of those lands of death, of pain, and fear,
Thou monarch great, great Dis, great Pluto, hear!

8.

'Keep ye this forest well, keep every tree;
Numbered I give you them, and truly told;
As souls of men in bodies clothèd be,
So every plant a sprite shall hide and hold:
With trembling fear make all the Christians flee
When they presume to cut these cedars old.'
This said, his charms he 'gan again repeat,
Which none can say but they that use like feat."—(F.)

His words make night's torches turn pale, the moon wrap herself in clouds; and, at his call a second time repeated, the demons rise and accept the charge. The effect soon appears. The Franks go next day to cut the trees, but are driven back dismayed by fearful prodigies. A guard of chosen warriors escort the men once more to their labours; and return to report that a heart begirt with triple adamant could hardly bear to hear the roarings and howlings, mingled with voice of trumpet and sound as of thunder, that issue from the wood's mysterious depths. A soldier, named Alcasto, who boasts a breast insensible to alarm, volunteers, deriding the rest, to go and hew down the first tree. He indeed resists the horror of the strange noises, but, as he prepares to enter the enchanted circle, a wall of fire rises suddenly to enclose it, and from its blazing turrets ghastly monsters aim flaming darts at him; so that Alcasto slowly, and sorely against his will, retreats like a lion from his hunters, and makes known his shame to Godfrey.

During the next three days the bravest in the camp essay the adventure, but without success. Then at last Tancred, faint yet with loss of blood and sorrow, goes forth to try his fortune. He listens little moved to the sound which has scared so many; the fiery bulwarks present to him no insuperable obstacle, since, rather than disappoint the hopes which are fixed on him, he boldly leaps into the flames, and his courage is rewarded by their vanishing. Penetrating then undisturbed into the farthest recesses of the forest, he finds himself standing before a lofty cypress with strange characters engraven on its bark: only those written in Syriac could be understood by Tancred:—

"O hardy knight! who through these woods hast passed
Where death his palace and his court doth hold:
O trouble not these souls in quiet placed!
O be not cruel as thy heart is bold!
Pardon these ghosts deprived of heavenly light;
With spirits dead why should men living fight?"—(F.)
—Canto XIII.

And while Tancred ponders on the meaning of these words, a sighing, sobbing sound arises amid the trees; his heart seems about to melt with sorrow and pity, and he can only withstand the feeling by aiming a violent blow at the lofty cypress. Straightway follows the Virgilian marvel of blood gushing from the wounded trunk. Nor is that the worst; for next comes a voice which seems that of Clorinda, complaining bitterly that the cruel hand that deprived her of life is pursuing her forlorn spirit into this its last resting-place. "Nor I alone," it adds, "but all the spirits of those slain in this siege have been bound in these trees by enchant-

ment. Thou art a murderer if thou cuttest down one of them." The knight, like the half-delirious patient who sees dragon and chimera dire, half suspecting the falsehood of the apparition, yet half believing in it, knows indeed that his dear lady is far beyond the reach of such evil spells, yet cannot help acting as if she were really bound by them; and retires, leaving the adventure unaccomplished.

It is then that the Hermit Peter announces to the disappointed chiefs that its successful conclusion is reserved to another hand, even Rinaldo's; and that both it and the capture of the city now draw on apace. It is shortly after, in answer to Godfrey's prayers, a seasonable rain has relieved the sufferings of his soldiers from drought, that a vision directs him to commit Rinaldo's recall (accorded at his uncle Guelph's request) to Peter's direction; who easily finds two volunteers to carry the message. One of them is Charles, the bearer of Sweyn's sword to his destined avenger; the other the accomplished Ubaldo. These are sent to a solitary at Ascalon; where a venerable man, with beechen crown and long white linen robe, announces himself to be the sage of whom they are in search, by passing a swollen river dry-shod, as he waves a mystic wand. He is a Christian, and his arts are the white magic, which depends on a knowledge of nature's mysteries. He leads them far down to his marvellous abode near the centre of the earth, where all rivers have their source, and where, in a light which is neither that of sun or moon, all gems are sparkling; where the celestial sapphire quivers blue, the carbuncle flames, the emerald glows gladly, and the diamond burns with steady light. Here, after a feast

served by unseen hands in gold dishes and crystal goblets on a table of silver, the tale of Rinaldo's adventures is told.

Armida, resolved to avenge on him the deliverance of her captives, laid a snare for him, into which he fell. But the chains in which she bound him were garlands of flowers; for his manly beauty, as he slumbered in her toils, won the heart to which so many knights had laid siege in vain, and she forgot her vengeance and her plots in love. She has transported him in her magic chariot to the distant Fortunate Isles, where they are now passing their days in a dream of delight.

The sage gives Charles and Ubaldo exact directions how to proceed, and a potent wand, which can subdue Armida's spells; and next morning he puts them on board a barque,—steered by a beautiful woman, on whose robe the light plays with ever-changing colours (Fortune herself),—which flies with incredible velocity over the waters of the Mediterranean. One noted place on its shore is passed after another. As their guide points out to them where once stood Carthage, the poet exclaims—

> "Great cities die, and famous kingdoms die;
> Man's pride and pomp are hid by sand and grass;
> Yet man disdains his own mortality!"
>
> —Canto XV.

On the fourth day from their departure they pass the Straits of Gibraltar, and hear a prophecy of Columbus and his great discovery. Then the Peak of Teneriffe rises to view. One fair isle comes into sight after another, and at last they land on the loveliest island of the whole group, uninhabited save by Armida and her

attendants; whose paradise, fair but unholy, occupies its mountain-top.

The new Calypso's bower, far surpassing the ancient in its varied beauty, and more than rivalling Ariosto's garden of Alcina, is fenced by rocks, slippery with ice and snow. The messengers climb up them to a region of perpetual spring. Their golden wand puts to flight the dragon and the lion that guard its ever-blooming roses and lilies, and the herd of furious wild beasts that range on the mountain's side; and then the stately palace of Armida rises to their view beyond the flowery solitude on the margin of a lake. They pass the fount whose waters cause whoso drinks them to die of laughter, disregarding the song and allurements of the dangerous Naïads,[1] who disport themselves therein; go through the gates, richly sculptured with the triumphs of love, which display Hercules with Iole, Antony with Cleopatra, on their burnished silver; and thread the labyrinthine mazes within their enclosure. They extricate themselves from them by the help of the friendly magician's book, and find themselves at last in the garden of delight, graced by—

"The painted flowers, the trees upshooting high,
The dales for shade, the hills for breathing space,
The trembling groves, the crystal running by;
And that which all fair works doth most aggrace,
The art which all that wrought, appearèd in no place."[2]

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[1] The reader will find them portrayed in Spenser's "Faery Queen," Book II., Canto 12.

[2] Spenser's somewhat free but beautiful translation of this, and stanzas 12, 14, and 15, has been preferred (with two slight alterations) to every other.

There the same stem bears blossoms, as well as partly and wholly ripened fruit. There, too—

12.

"The joyous birds, shrouded in cheerful shade,
Their notes in wanton song attempered sweet;
The murmuring breeze the leaves and waters made
By varied touch in gentle converse meet.
. . . . . .
The water's fall with difference discreet,
Now soft, now loud, unto the wind did call;
The gentle, warbling wind low answerèd to all.

14.

The whiles one bird did chaunt this lovely lay:
'Ah! see, whoso fair thing dost fain to see,
In springing flower the image of thy day:
Ah! see the virgin rose how sweetly she
Doth first peep forth with bashful modesty,
That fairer seems the less ye see her may;
Lo! see soon after how made bold and free
Her barèd bosom she doth broad display;
Lo! see soon after, how she fades and falls away.

15.

'So passeth in the passing of a day
Of mortal life the leaf, the bud, the flower,
Ne more doth flourish after first decay,
That erst was sought to deck both bed and bower
Of many a lady, many a paramour:
Gather, therefore, the rose whilst yet is prime,
For soon comes age that will her pride deflower;
Gather the rose of love, whilst yet is time,
Whilst loving thou mayst lovèd be with equal crime.'"

The chorus of birds respond with notes of love: love seems to breathe from every tree, and to fill both earth and air. But, rigid and unbending as beseems the mes-

sengers of fate, the chosen pair move on, insensible to all these allurements, until the trees part and disclose to them Rinaldo, alternately kissing Armida and mirroring himself in her eyes, as they repose together on the flowery grass. Unseen, they watch for the moment when the enchantress leaves him alone for a while, and goes to review her written spells. Then the knights spring from their ambush. Rinaldo starts, like Achilles among Deïdameia's maidens, at the sight of their flashing armour, and blushes as he beholds in Ubaldo's polished shield, held up before him as a mirror, his own effeminate array, and sword rusting, wreathed with roses. Waking as from a dream, Rinaldo, stung by the cavalier's reproaches, tears off the garlands which disgrace him, traverses the labyrinth with his mentors, and hastens to the shore.

His retreat is seen in the distance by Armida, who instantly tries to stop it by her magic arts. But they prove powerless against a strength and wisdom both greater than her own. Then she leaves her incantations to try the charm of suppliant and distressed beauty. She who, till she became enamoured of Rinaldo, had "turned and overturned Love's kingdom at her will, hating all lovers, and loving herself alone, now neglected, scorned, and abandoned, follows him, who despises and flees from her." Her pleadings are as passionate as Dido's: they move the heart to which they are addressed no more than hers did. Even Armida's offers to follow Rinaldo as a captive handmaid, to be to him in battle either shield-bearer or shield, and die for his love, since she may no longer live for it, awaken, so Tasso tells us, compassion only, not love, in a breast wholly congealed by reason. Rinaldo's refusal shows a regard for appearances, and the cold

courtesy of his offer to be Armida's knight, so far as his religion, honour, and warlike engagements will permit, reveals an estrangement which may well exasperate this new Medea, turned so suddenly from the victorious enchantress into the defeated and deserted woman. Her outburst of wrath, her curses on her betrayer, rival Dido's, and then she falls fainting on the sand.

She recovers, to find herself alone. Then she resolves to revenge herself at any price on Rinaldo, and determines to return to Asia for the purpose. But she has one work to do first. With dishevelled hair, her lovely face distorted by rage, she goes back through her rich gates and sumptuous corridors.

68.

"Soon as she reached her halls, with summons dread,
She called th' infernal gods unto her aid.
Then o'er the sky black clouds their pall dispread,
And straight the sun grew pale with ghastly shade,
The wind's fierce blast shook every mountain's head,
While hell beneath a sudden roaring made;
And through the palace wide, nought met the ear
Save noises, howlings, murmurs, shrieks of fear.

69.

Then darker shade than gloom of starless night,
Egyptian-like wrapped the gay courts around,
Pierced here and there by lightning, gleaming bright
One instant 'mid the murky mists profound.
Then cleared the shade at last; the sun with light
Pallid broke through the air, still sorrow-drowned;
But of the palace there appeared no trace,
Nor could men say—This was of old its place.

70.

E'en as the clouds build works that will not last
To image some enormous pile in air,

By winds soon scattered, by sun melted fast,—
As fly the dreams that sick men's couches scare,—
So speedily from sight that dwelling past,
Leaving the mount in native wildness bare.
Then on her ready chariot she on high,
As was her wont, soared upward through the sky."
—Canto XVI.

CHAPTER XV.

RINALDO'S RETURN—CAPTURE OF THE CITY.

WHILE Armida, true to her threats, was presenting herself to the King of Egypt at Gaza, and there offering her hand as a prize to the one among the captains of his enormous army, assembled for the relief of Jerusalem, who should succeed in slaying Rinaldo, her fugitive lover had been welcomed by the sage of Ascalon, provided by him with resplendent arms,—the shield adorned by his ancestors' exploits,—and entreated to remember that, "not amid nymphs and sirens, among founts and flowers, but on the summit of the steep and rugged hill of Virtue, lies man's happiness;" had made his public submission to Godfrey, received solemn absolution from Peter, and gone to accomplish the enterprise of the enchanted forest. An easy one in his case; for his new-born austerity enables him to cross the golden bridge, which leads him through a wilderness of flowers, to behold the hundred lovely ladies, who start forth from as many trees to welcome him with dance and song, and even to gaze on the semblance of Armida issuing from a great myrtle-tree in their midst with mingled endearments and reproaches, without being

turned from his purpose. The hundred-armed giant and hideous Cyclops, into which these bewitching forms change when Rinaldo begins to assault the central tree, affect him as little: it falls amid spectral illusions, storm and earthquake; and, the spell once broken, the forest ceases to be haunted, and the wood-cutter's work goes on in it unhindered.

Soon three movable towers replace the lost one, and Rinaldo has a prospect of using the sword of Sweyn against his slayer. For Godfrey, the head of the crusading host, having in him recovered its right hand, makes haste to strike with it before the arrival of the Egyptian army, which an intercepted letter,—the carrier-pigeon that bore it, chased by a falcon, took refuge among the Christians,—shows to be imminent.

Amid a cloud of poisoned arrows, and stones and darts discharged from catapult and balista, the mighty engines of offence are brought up to the walls of the doomed city; the battering-rams shake them from below, the towers grapple their summits with their drawbridges. While the other great commanders are fighting from them, Rinaldo boldly leads his brother adventurers to the place where the walls are highest and most difficult, making a pent-house of their shields. Planting a ladder there, he ascends it alone; his friends emulating his courage, but at first with worse success. A forest of darts, a mountain of stones, are shaken off the intrepid warrior's shield and armour, before he grasps the topmost battlement with one hand, with the other repelling its defenders, and finally plants his foot on the subjugated summit. Another moment and Eustace, by his help, places himself beside him.

Meantime the fight between the occupants of Godfrey's tower and the besieged, who seek to destroy it by counter engines and by Greek fire, has been a severe one. Ismeno the enchanter,—a witch on either side,—like Pluto between two Furies, tries to control the wind, which is driving the flames back against the defenders, and is miserably destroyed by a vast stone from a catapult, which shatters him and his companions. But as the tower, having escaped the fire, lets down its bridge upon the wall, Solyman still strives to cut it asunder, in spite of the darts rained down on him from an upper turret which rises at this critical moment by machinery from the midst. Godfrey goes to encounter him, emboldened by the archangel Michael's whisper, that the hour for Zion's deliverance has come; and by the glorious vision which his purged eyes behold of his deceased comrades-in-arms, and the host of the angels of God behind them, all fighting on his side. "Cut the bridge behind us, and let me take the Frank general's life at the cost of my own," cries Solyman, desperately. But Rinaldo and his troop advance before his men can obey the order, and disperse them; so that the Turk has to leave the road open to Godfrey, who plants the victorious standard of the Cross upon the wall. Tancred does the same, a moment later, on the wall opposed to his tower; and, seeing the town taken, the old king retreats before Raymond of Toulouse.

The besieged seek shelter, now their walls are forced, in two strong places,—the Mosque of Omar, and the citadel which goes by the name of the Tower of David. Rinaldo batters open the door of the former, and the fugitives within are slain. But Count Raymond is not

equally successful with the other fortress. Old Aladdin at first hesitated to follow Solyman to its shelter, for—

"'Alas!' (quoth he) 'alas! for this fair town,
Which cruel war beats down ev'n with the plain:
My life is done, mine empire trodden down;
I reigned, I lived, but now nor live nor reign;
For now, alas! behold the fatal hour
That ends our lives, and ends our kingly power.'"—(F.)

But the undaunted Soldan, after putting him inside, stands, mace in hand, on the threshold, and there overthrows and wellnigh captures Raymond among many slain; so that the assault of the citadel has to be left for the morrow.

Argantes, meantime, fearing defeat more than death, stands his ground to the last; when, distinguishing Tancred among his foes, he cries scornfully to him: "Is it thus you keep your pledged word? thus late, and not unaccompanied, that you return to our duel? Woman-slayer, you shall not escape death at my hand." Tancred willingly accepts the challenge, bids Argantes follow him to a place where they can fight undisturbed, and guards his enemy from his friends until they reach a narrow wooded dale, enclosed by an amphitheatre of hills. The Christian knight sees that the pagan has lost his shield, and throws away his own; then observing Argantes turning, lost in thought, towards Jerusalem, he asks him of what he is thinking. "Of my vain endeavour to save that ancient and regal city," replies Argantes; "and how your head is a small victim to console me for its fall." Thereupon the mortal conflict begins. Each combatant gives and receives many cruel wounds, the method of which Tasso de-

scribes with a vividness and a force which only a practised swordsman like himself could have commanded. At last Tancred, seeing his adversary's blood flowing in torrents while his own only runs in drops, bids him yield to fortune rather than himself, and promises to use over him none of a captor's rights. But Argantes scorns the offer, and uses his last remains of strength in a fearful blow.

> "As a hot brand flames most ere forth it go'th,
> And dying blazeth bright on every side;
> So he, when blood was lost, with anger wroth
> Revived his courage when his puissance died;
> And would his latest hour which now drew nigh
> Illustrate with his end, and nobly die."—(F.)
>
> —Canto XIX.

The two-handed stroke was such that Tancred must have felt fear, says the poet, had nature given him a heart which it could enter. But Argantes follows it up by a second, which he missing, falls; while loss of blood makes him too weak to rise. Tancred repeats his courteous offers, and receives for answer a stealthy thrust. Then at last his forbearance fails, and he gives the death-blow to his adversary—who dies as he lived, "proud, formidable, and ferocious" to the end. Tancred thanks God devoutly for his victory, sheathes his bloody sword, and tries to go back to the city; but, after a few steps, he swoons away, and is left by the narrator, lying on the ground apparently as dead as Argantes.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE EGYPTIAN HOST.

The war-cloud that gathered at Gaza is now ready to burst at Jerusalem. It is with its expected coming that Solyman cheers the hearts of the garrison of the citadel: it is for news of the numbers and discipline of the combined legions of Asia and Africa that Godfrey anxiously awaits the return of Tancred's squire, Vafrino, who has been sent on a secret mission to report on them. Now while this clever spy, moving about among their tents, contrived to penetrate the pavilion where Armida sat sad and pensive, with tears in her beautiful downcast eyes, while the brave Tisaphernes, the Indian Adrasto, and Altamore, King of Samarcand, strove to cheer her by hopes of speedy vengeance, a damsel in her train disclosed herself to him as the long-lost Herminia. This former captive of his master had, on forsaking the hospitable shepherd's cottage, been again taken prisoner; and this time by Egyptian marauders, whose chief had placed her among Armida's attendants. Vafrino, at her request, helps her to escape, and return with him to the crusading army, where Herminia owns that her heart has always remained; and is rewarded

by her for his aid by the disclosure of an important secret—namely, how Emireno, the King of Egypt's renegade-general, has engaged the fierce Ormondo and eight others to slay Godfrey by assuming the white and gold surcoats and cross of his body-guard, and so getting close to him unperceived in the approaching battle.

In discourse on the enemy's designs, and in tender reminiscences of how Tancred befriended her at Antioch, mixed with timid hopes for the future, Herminia draws near Jerusalem; when lo! the path before her is slippery with blood, a gigantic form lies along it, still menacing heaven with upturned but dead face, and a little way beyond lies another, at sight of whom the faithful squire exclaims, "Alas! here is Tancred slain." Herminia flings herself from her horse, and her tears fall fast and heavy on the face which she seems "doomed to look at without an answering look,—to find only to lose for ever." But those tears appear to have a reviving power; a faint groan answers her lamentations. "Look at me, Tancred," cries the damsel, "who mean to die with you,—to bear you company on your long journey: do not depart so quickly as to leave me behind. This is all I ask of you." But Vafrino hopes better things from his master's appearance. Herminia binds up his wounds with her veil and her long fair tresses, stanches the blood by a charm; and his followers who have come to look for him bear the reviving knight to the holy city,—Argantes to an honourable burial.

Both things are done by Tancred's express order; for his foeman was brave indeed, and, for himself, if die he must, to die where Christ died will be best and safest. However, not death, but recovery and a happy union

with the fair lady who loved him so tenderly, are the things that in truth await him there.

Next day the Egyptian army is descried afar; on the following the Christians march forth to give it battle. Each commander stirs up the courage of his men by a speech,—Emireno addressing his many squadrons in many languages, and offering them a thousand inducements to fight bravely; Godfrey, like Cæsar before Pharsalia, cheering his compacter and better-trained battalions by the hope of an easy victory over men who scarcely know their general, and whose very numbers will embarrass them in the combat, yet whose defeat will end many wars in one; and bidding them fight as they are wont, remembering alike the honour of themselves, of their leader, and of Christ! Then the adverse hosts advance and join battle—the sight of which raging fiercely in the plain below draws Solyman from his retreat in the citadel. He and Aladdin sally forth to join it, overthrowing for the second time Count Raymond on guard to prevent a sortie; and for a season the Soldan deals death and disaster among the Christians, slaying among many others the courageous Gildippe and her faithful spouse.

But Tancred is roused from his sick-bed by the clang of arms, and, though too weak to bear his armour, covers the prostrate Count of Toulouse with his shield, and gains for the Toulousans the victory over the old king. Raymond, rising with juvenile vigour to his feet, looks round for Solyman, and not seeing him, leads his Gascons to defeat the paynims, slays Aladdin, and displays the victorious standard of the Cross on the top of the citadel.

While this is going on, Godfrey (warned in time by Vafrino) has seen his intending murderers cut to pieces by his true body-guard, and has met the King of Samarcand and his followers in vehement fight,—the conflict on the other wing and in the centre raging equally, and as yet undecided.

51.

"Beside his lord slain lay the noble steed ;
  There friend with friend lay killed like lovers true ;
There foe with foe, the live under the dead,
  The victor under him whom late he slew.
A hoarse unperfect sound did each where spread,
  Whence neither silence nor plain outcries flew ;
There fury roars, ire threats, and woe complains,—
One weeps, another cries, he sighs for pains.

52.

The arms that late so fair and glorious seem,
  Now soiled and slubbered, sad and sullen grow ;
The steel his brightness lost, the gold his beam,
  The colours had no pride, nor beauty's show ;
The plumes and feathers on their crests that stream
  Are strewèd wide upon the earth below :
The hosts both clad in blood, in dust and mire,
Had changed their cheer, their pride, their rich attire."—(F.)

It is now that, Godfrey's right wing getting enveloped by the hostile archers and slingers, Rinaldo gallops forward with a shock as of an earthquake at the head of his squadron of Adventurers, and mows the enemy's broken troops down. Routing them and the infantry behind them, he penetrates as far as Armida's gilded chariot. She sees him : so does her band of champion lovers. They attack him, and are overthrown or slain ; she thrice draws her bow, and thrice drops her arrow ;

the fourth time it leaves the string, but rebounds, to her secret joy, from Rinaldo's armour. Then, seeing her friends fallen round her, a panic seizes her, and she turns her car and flees, like Cleopatra at Actium; drawing after her to protect her flight a second Antony, in the person of the stalwart Altamore, whose own squadron suffers a complete defeat in his absence. In vain does the Indian Adrasto on the opposite wing get the better of his Christian opponents. His victorious career is rapidly cut short by Rinaldo, who meets him on his way to execute Sweyn's bequest, and at the same time to exact vengeance for Gildippe, and many others, newly slain by Solyman. Adrasto's pompous challenge, and two blows for Armida's sake, are met by a single stroke which at once deprives him of life; and at the sight an unwonted tremor invades the stout-hearted Soldan. Like Hector and like Turnus, he feels that his hour has come, and falls a scarcely resisting victim to Rinaldo's sword.

Then victory declares along the whole line for the Christians. Vainly is the king's guard of immortals rallied by Emireno and Tisaphernes. Vainly does the latter strive to perform his vow to Armida in her own presence—her first flight having been stayed where the serried ranks promised her safety. She sees him so evidently getting the worst in his single combat with Rinaldo, that she dares not even await its end, but quits her stately chariot, mounts a courser, and gallops from the field. The paynim seems in her to lose his sun, yet fights hard for the privilege of following her. On his fall Rinaldo looks round for another foe, and sees none left anywhere. All the opposed ranks are broken—all the standards fallen. Then he bethinks him of the

promise which still binds him to Armida, and the scene takes place between them which Tasso, after some doubt, finally retained in his poem. Rinaldo pursues and overtakes her, preparing to kill herself in a lonely wood; where, by entreaties and soothing words, by the promise to place her on the throne of Damascus,—yea, if she will but become a Christian, to exalt her to the highest of Eastern crowns,—he wins her back to life and love.

136.

"Thus plaineth he, thus prays, and his desire
Endears with sighs that fly, and tears that fall;
That as against the warmth of Titan's fire
Snowdrifts consume on tops of mountains tall,
So melts her wrath, but love remains entire:
'Behold,' she says, 'thine handmaid and thy thrall.'"
—(F.)

Meantime Godfrey has slain first Emireno's standard-bearer and then himself, has courteously received the brave Altamore's surrender, and has captured the Egyptian camp. The well-fought day is succeeded by a happy evening.

144.

"Thus conquered Godfrey; and as yet the sun
Dived not in silver waves his golden wain,
But daylight served him to the fortress won
With his victorious host to turn again.
His bloody coat he put not off, but run
To the high temple with his noble train;
And there hung up his arms, and there he bows
His knees, there prayed,[1] and there performs his vows."
—(F.) Canto XX.

[1] Fairfax here omits the "devoutly adored the Great Sepulchre" of his original.

And so Tasso's great poem closes,—its last lines presenting to us the picture of the good knight who refused afterwards to wear a crown of gold where his Saviour wore the crown of thorns, kneeling with all his chivalry behind him in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, rescued, as they fondly trusted, for ever by their swords from the grasp of the Moslem oppressor.

CHAPTER XVII.

TASSO'S LATER POEMS: "TORRISMONDO"—"SEVEN DAYS OF CREATION"—"JERUSALEM CONQUERED."

Tasso began, as we have seen, his "Torrismondo" at the Court of Ferrara, and finished it at that of Mantua, —his seven years' imprisonment intervening between its conception and execution.

The story is eminently tragic; since its hero, overwhelmed with shame, when the play opens, at having been led by his passion for Alvida to betray the trust reposed in him by his friend Germondo, makes the horrible discovery, before its close, that the bride whom he hopes to induce the King of Sweden to resign to him is, in truth, his own sister; and that thus the wrong which he has done her can never be atoned for, and is, in fact, a crime of the deepest dye. We have here a situation dark and terrible, like that of the "Œdipus Tyrannus." To what extent Tasso might have succeeded in turning it to good account under happier circumstances, can only be conjectured. As it is, the promise of the commencement is far from being fulfilled as the tragedy goes on. Tasso found no colours with which to discriminate between the self-reproach, not unrelieved by hope, of

his hero's state at the beginning, and the horror of deep darkness which should have enfolded him at its close. We mark the passage of the Œdipus of Sophocles, from proud security to desperate anguish, with awe and pity. Tasso's picture, on the contrary, is gloomy throughout; and the fatal discovery produces very insufficient effect. Alvida kills herself,—not, like Jocasta, overwhelmed by its horror, since she gives it no credence, but simply because she thinks herself betrayed by Torrismondo; who, in his turn, dies rather than survive her. The feeling which makes the Theban prince, when his real position is disclosed to him, resolve to behold the sun no more, is not that which hurries the Norwegian to the tomb. And though the Chamberlain's account of the hapless couple's death is pathetic, the reader of his sad tale is not moved by it as he is by the misfortunes of more life-like and consistent personages.

The chorus with which the play ends is a wail over Tasso's own blighted hopes, and stands in touching contrast with the more cheerful strains of his "Aminta." Torrismondo's mother has been borne away, dying with grief for her children's death; King Germondo, bereft of his royal friend and promised bride, has exclaimed—

> "Alas! my life, not life, vapour, or shade,
> Or image of true life; nay, rather death,"

when the Chorus respond to his lamentation with this doleful chant:—

CHORUS.

> "Ah, tears! ah, hopeless woe!
> Life passes, flows away; yea, flies
> Like snow that melting lies.
> All summits stoop, to earth is thrown

Each strongest tower ;
Each kingdom's power
Falls, peace destroying what through war had grown.
Like sunlight dimmed by winter, so burns low
Glory, and leaves no after glow.
Like some swift stream from Alpine height descending,
Like flashing light
In calm still night,
Like wind, or smoke, or arrow swiftly wending,
So flies our fame, so honours here below
Wither like flowers and go.
What hope we here, what wait for any more ?
Triumphs and palms pass by,
Leaving the soul sad memory,
Laments and tears and of long sorrows store.
What then can Friendship, what can Love bestow ?
Ah, tears ! ah, hopeless woe !"

"The Seven Days of the Creation" is a descriptive and didactic poem, in the unusual form in Italian of unrhymed iambics. It is a work more honourable for the most part to Tasso's intentions than successful in its performance ; for its descriptions lack the luxuriance of his earlier days, its well-meant admonitions are somewhat commonplace and prosaic, and its verse is too often like prose cut into equal lengths. Here and there, however, its writer's genius reasserts itself. Poetic imagination reappears in passages such as that which depicts the sudden green spreading over the dry brown earth on the Third Day.

"Like woman, sick and grieving hitherto,
Her mantle black and mourning veil cast off,
By rich robe decked and jewels all of gold
Beyond all wont with artful loveliness,
Even so the earth which, with a look of woe,

Sadly in squalid semblance had been seen,
Of herbs, of flowers, of new glad leafy trees
Made a rich verdurous vesture for her limbs
Grown beautiful to sight ; and straightway wove
For her long tresses wreaths of varied hue."

There is a little of Milton's "magic of names" in places like this, in which the author, speaking of lakes, apostrophises his own country, viz. :—

"Who can forget thy Thrasymene ? or that
Which in its sweet breast Manto's city holds,
Or Larius vast of size, Benacus great,
Like to the sea in prideful mighty waves,
Or others, whence men call thee yet the glad ?"

Lines like the following on the Fourth Day,—the Creation of the Sun,—although not otherwise than good, are chiefly recommended by their piety and excellent purpose. They are given here as one specimen out of many:—

"If beauteous thus . . .
The sun, . . . which on our world so brightly shines,
Like to an eye to light it and adorn,
If never can its sight serene and clear
Depart and leave us fully satisfied,
Though him one day a tardy death awaits,
What ageless, timeless beauty shall the saints
Behold in the great Sun of Righteousness ?
If to the blind even not to see our sun
Is pain, what the ungrateful sinner's pain,
Deprived of the One, true, eternal Light ?"

But there is more poetry in the following lines on the angels, from which Milton may have learned something :—

"These glorious and divine intelligences
Were by our God created the first day,

Before the sun and the fair starry spheres ;
And then by Him on the fourth day divided
Each to his proper place : as general
Well-skilled his faithful warriors in their ranks
And troops disposes, setting them to guard
Strong city on high rock and lofty tower.
Some the bright wheels above to turn were sent ;
. . . . . .
Some, as the great King's flying messengers,
To manifest His will on earth to men,
Bearing both down and up, now grace, now prayers :
The grace divine for ever swift and prompt,
The prayers of men too oft both late and slow."

And there is at any rate ingenious piety in Tasso's words about eclipses :—

" No mortal light shines in this lower world,
Or splendour of great fortune,—dazzling eyes
Erring and weak of the base herd,—the which
Is never troubled, and doth never fail.
Lift, then, thy mind to the high primal Light,
Holy, divine, the Light eterne that knows
Nor rise nor setting in His place on high,—
No, nor eclipse, that dwindles not, or fades :
But who once, vested in our manhood, made
An eclipse with Him of the troubled sun
Unwonted ; which with shame and wonder saw
Nature in tears and sad."

The poet's farewell to the earth which he was so soon to leave, in the introduction to his Fifth Book, has a grave and pathetic charm :—

" The sojourner long time in foreign land,
Who to his own great country to return
Thinks, after fortunes strange and exile sad
And lustrums spent in hard and weary life,
To his tried hostelry and courteous host

Grateful and friendly shows him ere he goes.
Even so do we, who long to make return,
Or soon or late to heaven, from this our low
Dim cloister of the earth that sea surrounds,
Whence many years dear nourishment and food
We have received, and pleasant lodging-place,
Owe last good offices, and words and gifts
Of piety and love,—in thankfulness
Memorial raising, fair nor soon to die,—
To this our kind and pitying ancient nurse,
Which clasped our childhood and our age sustains."

Tasso's description of the fabulous phœnix has been admired. It dwells, according to him, on a plain at the top of lofty mountains in the farthest clime of "the odorous and lucent East," near the golden gates of the sun, which it salutes every morning at its rising by a sacred song,—

"To which, not e'en in part, can Cynthia's voice
Or sweet Parnassus' harmony be likened.
Nor it can Hermes' resonant lyre resemble,—
No, nor the notes of white and dying swan."

Where that sweet song is heard, "pallid diseases never come,"—

"Or sick Old Age, or cruel Death; or yet
Evil desires, and shameful thirst for gold,
Or wicked crimes, or haughty Mars, or love
Madly pursuing death. Anger and grief,
And mourning, stay far off, and Poverty
Ill-clad, with wakeful thoughts and thorny cares
And straitened want. There never tempest blows,
Or whirlwind, its strong fury; o'er those plains
Dark clouds their veil of blackness never stretch,
Or from on high falls the impetuous rain."

When the poet has finished his survey of the animal

kingdom, his transition (in the Sixth Book) to the creation of man is marked by this fine image. Weary of his long course, it is, as he says, with eagerness that he comes at last—

"Where amid flowery shades of spreading trees,
'Mid thousand beauties, thousand odours sweet,
Man by God made awaits and calls for me.
Like son, who on a day of feast and pomps
Walks through a crowded city, full of base
Wandering plebeians; if he see at last
High o'er the rest his dear sire's reverend face,
Resplendent from afar, a king adorned
With crown and purple, mighty; he disdains
The motley crowd and lowly herd, and there
Betakes him where encouraging invites
Close to the lofty majesty august
His father's beckoning hand or well-known call:
So through this world created and adorned,
City of mortals and immortals both,
Great and sublime, . . . I moved but now, desirous
Of marvels, searching each, and round me gazing;
So staying for a while my tardy course
Amid the beasts, its baser crowd. But now
That in his Paradise our ancient sire,
As yet unsevered from his King sublime,
With awful brow presents him, I, all else
Quickly forgetting, turn me unto him."

Here we have an anticipation of Milton's reverence for our first father, as we have something like a prelude to his sublimer thanksgiving strains, in the echo of the Benedicite, with which (mingled with the present groans and yearnings of the creation) Tasso's poem concludes. God's great work is ended, and,

"Then not alone the high intelligences,
The Angels and the Powers celestial, praised

The Eternal Father, and with hymns exalted;
Him the heavens also praised, . . . the sun, and ye,
Ye shining stars; thou, too, white-gleaming moon.
. . . . . .
The hard and rocky mounts, the verdant hills
Praised him, with them the hollow-murmuring sea;
The founts and gently-flowing streams were heard
To murmur forth His holy, glorious name.
. . . . . .
And even now this old and weary world
. . . . . .
Says to Him: Lord, eternal Father, who
Of nothing didst create me, and adorn;
. . . . . .
Me with thy right Hand dost uphold and prop,
. . . . . .
So that, in age so vast, I still am like
Myself in my first childhood, changing not,
Or losing what then decked me; not one yet
Of all my bright and golden ornaments
Failing me; . . . thee I sigh for, thee I call,
I who without thee nothing am. . . . To thee
I fly afresh from mine own self, and pray
To join me to thyself in love uplifting.
Love of thee melts me, loving thee I languish.
And when another fire consumes and melts,
Then may thy Love remake me, otherwise,
Brighter than now; and take all weariness
And motion from my sick and languid frame.
So may find rest at last the old tired world,
Gone forth from time to thine eternity,
No more thy swiftly rolling temple; found
At length thy glory's ever firm abode.
Thus speaks the world. Deaf truly is that soul
That cannot hear its voice and plaintive chant,
Nor join it in its weeping and its prayers."

The changes by which Tasso's "Jerusalem Conquered" is distinguished from its greater predecessor have been already described, as well as his final dissatisfaction with both poems. One or two specimens, however, of his later work may be fitly inserted here.

Its twentieth canto is much admired by some Italian critics. In it Godfrey has a vision, first of the fortunes of the earthly Jerusalem, beginning with David and Solomon, and ending with its destruction by the Romans; and then afterwards of the celestial city of the Apocalypse, descending from above "like a bride adorned for her husband." Finally, he is caught up, as he dreams, into heaven itself, where he beholds the divine glory, and hears the angels' song of praise to the Everlasting Son.

60.

"In hundred sounds diverse, by hundred names,
The King who rules the stars is there adored:
Angelic song these holy words proclaims
In resonant music through heaven's palace poured:
'O Fair and One; true Light whence pure light flames,
Our sun, our morning-star we own Thee, Lord;
Thou fire, thy kindling warmth to spirits lending,
Thou holy Love to us by us descending.

61.

Of ages Thou art King; the Ancient Thou
And Latest; the Beginning and the End;
The just, yea justice' self to which we bow,
Power, mind, and reason whence God's works descend;
'Twixt God and sinners Mediator now,
From hell its spoil and captives Thou dost rend;
Life that dost swallow death in victory;
True health by whom to God our spirits flee.

62.

The truth, the way, Thou temple art and door,
Priest, lamb, and brazen serpent; lion strong,
Shepherd, physician pitying, who didst pour
Thy blood for us, enduring cruel wrong;
Exemplar, Image, both for evermore;
Healer of sickness, peace of warrior-throng;
Once worm, now river, fount, foundation-stone,
Bud, flower, true vine by fruitful grapes made known.

63.

The same yet other; now within Thine hand
Grasping the world, now held in one small heart;
Like and unlike, now loosing from his band,
Now binding, Satan; 'neath the earth Thou art,
Then high in heaven triumphant dost Thou stand,
Making eternal Thy once mortal part;
Rewarding works, giver of holy laws,
High King, great God, of all things guide and cause.'"

—(J. C.) Canto XX.

Another of Tasso's later insertions has met with praise—namely, the stanzas in which he depicts Sultan Solyman sadly wandering after his defeat amid the tombs of the Kings of Judah, with their suggestion of the contrast between the peaceful rest of the dead and the tumultuous passions of the living. They are as follows:—

5.

"He left the royal road of paven stone,
By the wise son of godly David made,
To westward leading, and that other one
That northward tends,—of greater risk afraid;
From bows and quivers, paths whose red makes known
Man's blood shed, toward the south his footsteps strayed,
Till, like a wanderer, roaming far and fast,
In the king's vale his course he stayed at last.

6.

There he beheld that ruined monument
On which the ancient pillar stood erewhile,—
Statue of son through beauty insolent.

. . . . . .

7.

By steep tracks climbing round from vale to vale,
Willing to hide him from the foeman's eye,
Soon sees he graven marbles tell their tale
Ruined and scattered, once three columns high.
At this fresh sepulchre sad thoughts assail,
And bid him o'er his evil fortune sigh,
At sight of lofty work low ruin made,
Where, with her son, a queen in death was laid

8.

'From tomb to tomb thus guideth me my fate
(Said to himself the king in thought distressed),
'And aid or comfort amid fortune's hate
And cruel blows, none bringeth to my breast;
But whether lofty pile be raised in state
O'er me, or hid 'neath stones and briers I rest,
Buried like common kind, or like a king,
My sepulchre's downfall is trifling thing.'

9.

As thus he spake, around, with searching gaze,
His glance that valley's lonesome horrors tried:
No herdsmen there, no shepherds, shunned the rays
Of the fierce sun, and came in shades to hide;
The rosemary and other flowers their sprays
To deck those ruins raised in blooming pride;
By the green cypress there the palm-tree towered
That loftier rises when by load o'erpowered."—(J. C.)

—Canto XI.

These extracts, and others like them, for which there is here no room, have chiefly a melancholy interest. Tasso,

like Solyman, was wandering among tombs when he wrote them, and beguiling his sadness by flowers which, as those of which he here sings, bloom amid our graves —even those Scripture texts which his later years found their delight in paraphrasing.

He has versified his own experience, and the reflections which led him to turn away from mere secular themes, in his "Origin of the Congregation of Mount Olivet." A brief extract from its pious founder's discourse may fitly conclude these specimens of Tasso's later muse :—

"What seems most beautiful is vanity,
And all things that sense please and most delight ;
Vain is the course, the goal that speedily
The horses whirl round, vain their rapid flight ;
Vain, too, the theatre where night we see
Turned into day by torches burning bright ;
Vain every joust and pompous show ; and vain
Splendour of arms and triumphs that they gain.

. . . . . .

The shadow let us leave who seek the sun ;
Forsake the mist, and the true light pursue;

. . . . . .

Hence let us fly, for soon our days are done ;
The shadow of this world is passing too,—
Who passes with it has too late begun
His flight ; delays both shame him and undo.
Our deeds and boasts with time pass swift away,—
Stay thee on Christ ; make Him, the Truth, thy stay."

CHAPTER XVIII.

TASSO'S PROSE WRITINGS.

Tasso's prose has been preferred to his poetry by some Italian critics, who rank him with Dante and with Milton for the immensity of erudition and the nobility of thought, which they consider it to display. The works which have won for him this encomium comprise his discourses, orations, letters, and dialogues. Of the first-named, his Treatises on Heroic Poetry have an especial interest, as exhibiting the theory which is exemplified by the "Jerusalem Delivered." His "Reply of Rome to Plutarch," a discourse on the true causes of the Roman empire's greatness, has been styled the best oration in Italian; while his letters —highly prized and diligently collected by his contemporaries—were praised by them as only second to those of Cicero. They contain many wise sayings, the effect of which a pedantic display of learning occasionally impairs, however; and their pathos is frequently very genuine. "They give us," says Fornaciari, "a faithful portrait of their author's mind and life, . . . of his thoughtful and melancholy disposition; while they are admirable for their simplicity

and dignity." Nevertheless, taken as a whole, they are somewhat tedious reading, for their writer had little sense of humour; and the gaiety, the lively sallies of wit, which are what make the best letters so charming, are wholly wanting to Tasso's serious and sorrowful correspondence. He writes best when he discusses literary subjects, when he eloquently declaims on his own wrongs, or when he moralises in solemn weighty sentences. Here are a few specimens of these last:—

"Happiness belongs to virtue, prosperity to fortune." "Golden are those who, being born philosophers, will only be content with truth exactly considered; silver are those who, politicians by nature, are content with opinion and probability." "Justice, in the world providence, in a city peace and equity, is, in the mind, wisdom." "Let princes reflect that the world was built by mercy, and, in like manner, is by mercy preserved; and then they will imitate the Architect of this marvellous work—God." "Well said Lucretius that the one hands on the lamp of life to the other, after the fashion of what is done nowadays in our torch-dance; in which man receives it from woman, in whose hands life and death seem placed." "This life is like a fair which collects a vast crowd of merchants, thieves, and gamesters; whoever leaves it first is best off: he who delays longest gets weary, and, growing old, comes miserably to feel the want of many things." "We all go the same road either with dry or tearful eyes." "If true happiness consists in knowledge, and if perfect knowledge can only be acquired after death, felicity appears to be reserved for death, or after death. Why are we made proud and puffed up by the wisdom of this

life which is so similar to darkness, when in that other —the true life, though called by mortals death—our wisdom will resemble the purest light?"

Tasso's Dialogues have been variously estimated. Monti calls them "fountains of eloquence and of magnificent and most choice language." Foscolo says that they are "at once florid and majestic, clear in style, pure in diction, new and profound in thought, and strictly logical in their method of reasoning." It does not become an English writer to dispute the verdict of Italian critics on Tasso's style, which is, besides, undoubtedly a fine one; but it is allowable to say that his logic partakes a good deal of the verbal quibbling by which Plato represents Socrates as puzzling his hearers, and that the reader of his Dialogues will not so much be pleased in them by new thought as by old ones well expressed and skilfully arranged. In this primary point Tasso's conversations are far more like Cicero's than like Plato's; as they are likewise in their tendency to monologue whenever they discuss grave questions, and in their lack of the dramatic power and display of individual character, which give such a lasting charm to their Greek models. And of such resemblance to these as is in fact attained by them, Camerini says, in a somewhat slighting tone: "The exordiums of these Dialogues at times have a look of Plato; but as the discussion goes on, we do not find the variety and ornament which so naturally clothe Plato's great conceptions. The skeleton shapes of scholastic philosophy appear through the eloquent dress; whereas Plato's words are translucent with his ideas and divine exemplars." But if the Greek poet-philosopher stands forth with the fresh ardour of

the world's youth, gazing on newly discovered regions, much of which remains for him to explore, while his Latin and Italian followers chiefly employ themselves in registering and examining the discoveries of others, it is nevertheless true that their dialogues in each case mark important epochs in human thought.

Tasso, who died when Lord Bacon was a young man, has been called the precursor of Descartes in his Second Malpiglio,—"a dialogue that expresses the whole life of modern thought in action."[1] The Neapolitan Stranger, as Tasso calls himself, enters his young friend's richly provided study. "Malpiglio.—Here alone can I escape the multitude. N. S.—Say rather that here you escape solitude, since you dwell with orators, historians, poets, and philosophers. M.—They form a most noble multitude, and you are one of them, for I have your works here with the others; so that I am often with you when you least think it. N. S.—You are then like that Roman who was never less alone than when he was by himself. M.—He was accompanied by his thoughts; but I do not think one like his can enter here." "What! not poetic thoughts and imaginations, when, for instance, you are reading Petrarch?" is the substance of Tasso's rejoinder. "M.—These are pleasant thoughts; Scipio's were serious." Then Tasso goes on to ask whether, if he cannot fly the multitude of affections and passions which the poets nourish within us, he finds he can escape that of diverse opinions? "No," says the youth; "Petrarch makes me hold different opinions on the same subject. Nor do I entertain various notions only on death and love, according to the variety of times and occasions,

[1] Cecchi.

but on health and sickness; on adversity and prosperity; on poverty and riches; on nobility and baseness; on power and weakness; on royal and private life, whether active or contemplative; and, in sum, on all things of which poets, orators, and historians use to vary in their speeches." Tasso suggests the haven of philosophy as a safe retreat from such perplexities.

But then comes the question which of many promising harbours they shall try. There is that ancient port which bears Plato's name, fair and secure to the eye, but which tosses the vessels that seek refuge in it "by the opinions held by Pythagoras, Gorgias, Polus, Hippias, Prodicus, Thrasymachus, Dionysiodorus, and others, as if with tempestuous winds: neither do the arguments of Parmenides, Zeno, and Thales suffer it to enjoy any rest." Then, too, not to speak of the differences between Socrates and Plato (or rather, as we know, between Plato's earlier and his later self), there are the disputes of the old and the new Platonists on "the nature of demons, the ideas of numbers, the one and the good, the passage of souls into various bodies, and their return to the father; on republics, on happiness, on the virtues, and on the sciences." "M.—Why should we not take refuge in that other great and noble harbour, now being built, of Concord?" Tasso thinks it as yet too unfinished for their purpose: in other words, the reconciliation of the Platonic with the Aristotelian philosophy—a dream of his day—is as yet uneffected. Shall they, then, try any of the ports of the Peripatetics? Those which bear the names of Aquinas and Scotus Tasso declines with real or feigned respect, as reserved for holier barques than theirs. That which belongs to Aristotle himself is per-

turbed at its mouth with stormy billows,—questions hard to solve about genera and species; and so Tasso goes on, conducting his friend from difficulty to difficulty, and finding nowhere any rest among the tossing waves.

Tired with the prolonged and unsuccessful search, Tasso gives it at last up, and proposes to land. "N. S.—Here let us fasten our mind's weary shallop, and quit it for this beautiful sea-shore, near that sweet fountain overshadowed by an olive; which, stretching out its branches betwixt a laurel and a palm tree, casts with them its shade over a venerable cave, wellnigh overgrown with ivy. . . . We have not been able to flee from a multitude by our retreat into the haven of philosophy; . . . for there too we have found numbers and contrariety of opinions. . . . If we want to avoid them, we must lay aside arguments, and ascend to the contemplation, and, as it were, simple sight of the good, . . . that so, mounting up to pure intellect, we may contemplate the intelligible essence. M.—I am not fit for such lofty contemplation, but yet I will follow my guide. N. S.—To follow him we shall perchance have to leave behind us the laurels, the fountains, and the swans, with thousands of other trees and birds which, painted by nature's master-hand, make these shores resound with their sweet harmony,—in order to climb a very lofty summit. . . . M.—Happy he who is permitted to ascend it. N. S.—Truly happy,—yea, most happy; for thrice blest is it to understand where to understand is to touch: up there, then, with our own, we shall touch the divine intellect. . . . And yet, not even then shall we have fled the multitude whereof we were speaking, forasmuch as those realms are full of

an intellectual multitude; and everything in the intelligible world is double. . . . So then, if we wish to flee, we must leave all human thoughts behind us, and take the flight which is called that of the solitary to the solitary. But I, impeded by the world and by myself, know not whether so noble a flight is within my power. To many, indeed, it is conceded, and none detains them from escaping, as it were, from themselves; but when they have fled from all multitude, if they cannot also flee all solitude, will they be happy?"

If in the "Malpiglio" Tasso thus shows himself an eclectic, dissatisfied with all existing philosophies, he is a Neo-Platonist in his "Messenger," in which a "courteous spirit" unveils to him the nature of the subordinate intelligences and of the planetary influences, and in which he tries to see the mode of action of spirit upon matter. He is Platonic in his dialogue on "Art," and in his latest, on "Beauty," modelled after the "Hippias Major;" while his dialogue on "Virtue" follows Plato's "Protagoras" in many things, at the same time that it aims at expounding and defining the "Golden Mean" of Aristotle.

Tasso approaches Cicero more closely in such dialogues as the one on "Friendship," which so appropriately bears Manso's name, or that on "Clemency," for which Serassi claims the credit of occupying ground too slightly tilled by ancient moralists; while Xenophon's homelier wisdom appears in the dialogue on "Good Husbandry."

The dialogue on "Peace" concludes with this beautiful and touching passage: "Since it"—namely, peace securely based on justice—"cannot be discoursed on befittingly, it is fitly called silence. This is that high, that

profound, that sweet, that divine silence in which all injuries are hidden and all forgotten; this is that marvellous silence, as superior to every harmony, and to every concert that the angels make when they praise their Creator, as the divine darkness is more luminous than the sun, the stars, and every other light that is in heaven. . . . Whoso then looks at its exemplar, which is not union, but unity without multitude, and without (distinction of) substance, will know what true peace is: and this knowledge or science will be so mighty that the eloquent will never lack words with which to calm all the anger and passion of proud hearts. Nay, even I, who am a stammerer as you hear, might, by the grace of God, unloose this tongue in notes so lofty and so sonorous that all Italy should hear and wonder: nevertheless, I shall consider myself to have received that grace, if only I am able in the oblivion of this divine silence to drown the memory of all the offences, preserving that of the benefits, which I have received."

In a lighter style are "The Mask," in which the poet, no longer a partaker, goes forth as a spectator, of the gaieties of Ferrara, "Gaming," "Courtesy," and some others; notable among which is the "Dialogue on Love," which commemorates a brief holiday from prison, procured for Tasso by the kindness of Marphisa of Este. The poet stands silent and abashed before her and her beautiful companions, until, challenged by the witty Tarquinia Molza, he obliges the ladies by giving them a new definition of "Love."

It is the same learned Lady Tarquinia of whom Tasso complains (not, perhaps, quite in earnest) in his "Ghirlinzone." The friend so named meets him returning

earlier than usual from her house, and asks the reason. "I will tell you," says Tasso; "I had made an oration in praise of the most serene Duchess Barbara, daughter of the Emperor Ferdinand, and had brought it to her on a day when I found her seated between Messeri Francesco and Camillo,—men reputed most learned in the *belles lettres;* and she, taking it in her hand, so soon as she began to read it, perceived that it had no proëmium, on which she turned to Messer Camillo with a smile, and said to him,—'What do you think of this oration?' He replied, 'An oration without an exordium is like a man without a head.'" Tasso goes on to say that he defended himself by the authority of Aristotle, but in vain. Messer Francesco being asked his opinion, gave it likewise against him; saying that a proëmium occupies that place in an oration which a prelude does in music. Bowing to their collected wisdom, Tasso says that he went home, wrote the required proëmium, and then once more laid his oration before his fair censor. But this time she and her assessors took a fresh objection. It was written in the vulgar tongue, whereas Latin was the only language befitting such a noble subject. Tasso tells how he defended the Italian, maintaining its especial propriety on the present occasion, as the adopted speech of the princess whom he was lamenting,—"so that the tongue in which she, the daughter and sister of emperors, deigned to speak, would be truly ungrateful if it suffered any other to surpass it in her praises. Moved by these words, the Lady Tarquinia took the oration from my hand, but, trying to read it, found it as badly written as my compositions generally are; whereat, full of anger, she gave it back to me, commanding me not

to return to her presence till I brought her the oration better copied out and translated into the Roman tongue." This account of his troubles awakens Ghirlinzone's curiosity to hear the oration which caused them.

It begins thus: "Those who celebrate the living are, if I err not, like to those who praise actors while as yet they are performing their parts on the lighted stage before the painted scenery; for our life resembles a comedy, or rather a tragedy, full of various chances and changes of fortune, which now uplifts us from misery to felicity, and anon with contrary movement casts us down: now while the minds of all present are fixed in suspense and wonder, nothing seems more desirable than silence and attention, on which account praises then appear ill-timed and importunate, and rather the dictates of passion than of judgment; forasmuch as it is a beautiful death that reflects honour on the whole life, and it is by their end that all actions are approved. Very fitly, then, whilst the most serene Duchess Barbara yet lived, I admired her greatness and wonderful virtues in silence; nor did I wish by word or by writing to break the silence, or perturb the reverence of the rest. . . . But now that she is dead, or rather has returned to heaven, the great theatre of the world is resounding with tears, complaints, and lamentations; so that I may now impose silence, as it were, by sound of trumpet, and claim men's attention." Then follows a passionate appeal to all the inhabitants of the departed's adopted country, Italy, as well as of her native Germany, to praise, mourn, and imitate her virtues. The great house of Austria, from which she sprang, is depicted in glowing colours, with its sway wider than that

of Alexander or of Cæsar, extending "with double felicity in two hemispheres, where its princes display the cross and the eagles under other constellations, other stars, and other celestial signs than were ever beheld by the ancients." The orator goes on to describe how, by their beauty and goodness, the deceased princess and her sisters brought fresh honour to their family, and blessings on the country to whose princes they were given in marriage. The wife of Alphonso emulated the fidelity and goodness of Stratonice and of Cornelia, the chastity of Lucretia and of Tatia. Loving her husband, and by him beloved again, adorned by all the cardinal virtues, she was finally called to approve her unfaltering fortitude in the long and painful illness which bore her to the grave. Nor is such fortitude as hers less to be praised than is the courage of heroes, seeing that it is shown in no smaller perils than theirs. For theirs is indeed displayed amid tempest, earthquake, and slaughter; but this, unaccompanied by weapons and armies, confronts pain, goes to meet the terrors of death, and calmly abides the last departure. Overcome by the sight of his liege lady's last "sorrowful victory" by dying, the orator exclaims: "O brow, once serener than the sky, now overshadowed by death; eyes once full of light, but now of darkness; . . . whence so great and so sudden a change? O Barbara, niece, daughter, sister of Cæsars, . . . whither art thou gone? Where now abidest thou? How quickly is thy beauty turned to ashes. Is this the succession which we hoped for from thee? Are these the gifts I thought to offer thee?" But these plaints are hushed, as a voice tells him that she whom he bewails is happy, having "become of mortal

immortal, of earthly heavenly, of human divine. Neither have Styx, Cocytus, or Acheron received her, or Lethe robbed her of the memory of things dearest to her; nay, but her Lord and yours has welcomed her into heaven, where she triumphs with her father and with her imperial ancestors who fought here below for the Faith, where is shown to her the like honour as to Judith, Isabella, Maria, Matilda, Beatrice, Leonora, and so many others of her lineage or house. . . . There is no cause for our feeling any excessive desire of life; nor ought we rather to measure happiness by a long old age, than by the operations of a perfect virtue; so that we may conclude him to have lived long enough who has spent his allotted time in performing the noblest actions, and who has thereafter departed like unto a poet who has finished his epic without having even then satiated his audience. Truly therefore blessed is she who, having enjoyed all that life has which is desirable, abandoned it afterwards along with the ills and pains of sickness; and, full of all honours, adorned by all graces, nurtured amid sceptres and crowns, and grown up amid triumphs and palms, has risen from an earthly lordship to an empire in the heavens."

There is no space in a small book like the present for even a cursory account of many of Tasso's Dialogues. Readers curious in such matters may consult for themselves his quaint discussion of heraldic devices, his twice rewritten dialogue on "Pleasure," his treatise on "Courts,"—a subject his experimental knowledge of which was so dearly bought,—and his "Criticism of Italian Poetry" (styled from the Ferrarese poetess, Cavalletta), in which Tasso considers the structure of the

sonnet, and with sidelong shafts at the pedantry of his day, gives us "a lively idea of the sometimes prolix and tiresome, at other times gay and lively, not to say sarcastic, discussions," in which it delighted.

The long dialogue on "Nobility," and the shorter one on "Dignity," both repay perusal; as does "The Idols," on two accounts,—as marking an epoch in Tasso's moral and spiritual progress, and as containing his protest against the paganism of the Renaissance. Its opening conveys to us Tasso's apology for not having saluted the victor of Lepanto with a triumphant ode, and is more poetic than were doubtless the majority of those which it called forth.

He is in a garden at Rome, with his kind old friend Cataneo, and a younger one named Vitelli. "C.—This fountain, . . . by the murmur of its waters, may invite your muses to sing under the shade of these trees, which have just put on their new leaves. T.—Rather lull them to sleep by the sweetness of its sound, since by no sweeter were they ever before rocked to slumber. V.—Deep was their sleep, in truth, since it was not broken by the sound of drums and trumpets, and the clash of arms, with the soldiers' shouts, the roar of the winds and of the waves smitten by the oars and cloven by the victorious ships' prows, and the echo of the artillery. T.—That sound was so great that it was even heard by those who dwell beyond the Pillars of Hercules and the altars of Alexander: nor is there fish hidden among the most secret shoals of the Adriatic or Tyrrhene sea, or bird amid the tree branches, or beast in the caves, or, I had almost said, corpse in the sepulchre, that it has not awakened: and if I might exalt, as much as there seems

need, the greatness of that action, I would say that the souls of the Greek emperors, and of those other glorious men who exposed their lives to deliver Greece, have been stirred as if by an angelic trump, and expect both the end of so wrongful and wretched an enslavement, and to see the eagles return to those ancient nests whence they first spread their wings, and cover once more with the shadow of their pinions, not Constantinople alone, but either empire and either hemisphere. I myself am even yet stupefied by that excess of sound, just as are the inhabitants of Egypt, where the Nile falls from its high precipice; and if this comparison is a too small one, I must rise above the earth to find a suitable similitude. The harmony made by the celestial bodies as they move, fills not the senses otherwise than does that made by so much verse and prose in so many languages; in so many styles, and with such felicity of the praised and of the praisers; with so much glory alike of the celebrated and the celebrators. V.—You, then, alone, appeared mute amidst the harmony of the world. T.—Mute, no; for I was among the first to pray to God for the victory of the Christians, nor yet was I among the last to thank Him for it; but I hesitated to write His thanks and praises. V.—Your voice, then, was dispersed by the winds. T.—That is not dispersed which is not lost, nor are those words lost which bear our prayers to God; but I feared lest papers might be like the sands of the sea, which retain the foot-marks printed on them for but a little while; or that I should write on leaves like those of the Sibyl: because writings have no stability which are not founded on their writers' knowledge, and even the others fly like feathers before the breeze of popular

favour, and the grace of princes, which passes like the flowers of spring."

Many more examples of Tasso's success as a prose-poet, as well as of his excellence in the kind of eloquence which his own day most admired, might easily be given. Failing space will admit but two here, from the dialogue on "Beauty;" having tracked which from point to point, and discovered it to reside in the angelic mind and in the purified human soul, Tasso goes on to say: "And albeit I deny not that it is something inexpressibly eternal and divine, I yet know not what it is, because if it could be defined it might have some limit; but the beauty of the soul, peradventure, does not endure being described or circumscribed by place, time, matter, or words; and to search into it farther is, perchance, boldness and presumption, or a too courageous faith, like that of those who, passing within the veil of the temple, enter the Holy of Holies. There is it known, there contemplated, there only can what it is be understood; but we who are outside the veil keep admiring the columns and the beams of cedar and of odoriferous cypress-wood, the arches, the roof, the laver, and the images by which it is supported, calling that beautiful which so appears to us." This incomprehensible beauty of the soul can nevertheless be chiselled and polished by its possessor, as the sculptor does a statue, until "there shines forth a divine light of virtue, in which is seen temperance sitting in majesty." "Marvellous sculptors are they," is the rejoinder, "who, upon the columns of their own nobility, have polished the statues of eternal beauty." "It is further said," adds the first speaker, "that the soul does not make itself beautiful by the acquisition of any ex-

ternal thing, but by purging itself as fire does in its flame; for human virtues, which appear so beautiful, are nothing but the purgation of the impurity that they have contracted through the company of the body. Virtues are therefore natural to the soul, and beauty is native to it; but ugliness is a stranger to it, and derived from the contagion of the body. Foolish, then, without question, is the judgment of those who seek for beauty in these earthly limbs of ours; and to me they seem like unto those who look at images and shadows in the waters, as is fabled concerning Narcissus, and who, while they embrace the waves and flying wraiths, fall in and are drowned, without perceiving their peril. Wherefore the cry might well go forth to us: Friends, let us fly these fountains and these deceitful waters, and go back instead to our own dear country."

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